



# **Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation Stakeholder Interviews Report**

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## Contents

Introduction & Methodology.....	2
Themes.....	4
Findings with Representative Statements.....	5
Interviewee List.....	24
Appendix A: The Interview Responses: .....	25

## Introduction

Cocker Fennessy, Inc., a Seattle-based public affairs firm, was retained by the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) to perform stakeholder research to identify opportunities and challenges related to both ACCT—including possible sun setting of its existence in 2007—and issues faced by special needs transportation. Part of this process was to research the views of people who are familiar with the program and who represent a variety of perspectives.

The purpose of this research was to assist ACCT in answering questions such as:

- Have you heard of ACCT? What is your understanding of ACCT?
- What is your interest in special needs transportation? What are some of the priority issues for special needs transportation?
- What should ACCT do to support special needs transportation?
- In your estimation if ACCT was successful, what would that look like?
- If ACCT has not been successful with its charge do you know why?
- Is there a need for ACCT to continue in the future? If so, what issues should ACCT move forward? If not, why should ACCT terminate?
- How should the structure of ACCT change to increase the chance of success improving transportation for persons with special needs?
- ACCT members are from different organizations and have a variety of accountabilities, what should ACCT's relationship be to member organizations?

This paper reports on Cocker Fennessy's research and findings.

## Methodology

Cocker Fennessy conducted 25 phone interviews with stakeholders who were identified by Cocker Fennessy and ACCT staff. Interviewees were selected from a variety of categories:

- Legislators and local elected officials
- Transit agencies, associations and brokers
- Human service agencies and providers
- Low-income service providers
- Disabled community representatives
- Senior citizen community representatives
- Education agencies and associations
- Users of special needs transportation

The telephone interviews were conducted in September 2006 by Cocker Fennessy staff. Eight open-ended questions were asked during the interviews, which lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviewers used prompts to elicit more in-depth responses as appropriate.

To promote candor, interviewers assured participants that while their opinions would be reported to ACCT members, their names would not be associated with any specific views or quotations included in the report.

Cocker Fennessy also informed those who were interviewed that the results of the survey would be considered by ACCT members as they work with the Legislature on renewing legislation to continue, modify or eliminate the program.

## Themes

The purpose of the interviews was to gather a variety of ideas and perspectives from individuals familiar with special needs transportation and ACCT. The broad ranges of responses are included in the findings section of this report. We also thought it might be useful for ACCT members to be aware that some views were held by a majority of those interviewed. The following are themes that were expressed by nearly all of the interview participants.

1. The mission of ACCT—to coordinate and improve transportation services for special needs communities—is well understood and viewed as necessary.
2. ACCT should be continued. There is support for enacting a strong legislative mandate as well as full commitment from key players—Governor, Legislature, and major agencies. Participants said that without that mandate, commitment and participation, ACCT’s ability to make improvements to special needs transportation is greatly compromised.
3. ACCT is currently under-funded and under-staffed. There is a desire for providing sufficient, sustained and reliable funding for ACCT’s internal operations, its grant making abilities, and for special needs transportation services generally.
4. Performance measures should be developed and implemented. Participants said that ACCT needs to develop performance measures and indicators for the work it is coordinating. They feel measures are will help inform and drive policy decisions and they will demonstrate the benefits of coordination.
5. Streamlining and improving the bureaucracy of the overall special needs transportation system is necessary. Interviews stated that the many different requirements, regulations, funding mechanisms, etc. create artificial barriers that prevent many resources from being fully used. An example used by many interview participants was the inability to utilize school buses for other types of trips.

## Findings

The findings are conclusions and assessments based on what was heard in the interviews. Each finding is followed by representative statements made by the interviewees.

The interviews conducted were intended to serve as qualitative rather than quantitative research. The purpose was to gather a variety of ideas and perspectives, not to measure opinions as a public opinion survey would do.

Because the research was qualitative, the reported findings do not quantify the number of people who expressed ideas. The themes section of this report identifies observations made by a majority of the interview participants.

The findings are separated into the following categories:

- Perceptions of ACCT and its role
- Priority issues for ACCT and special needs transportation
- Structure and membership of ACCT
- Suggestions for increasing ACCT's success
- Future of ACCT

## Perceptions of ACCT and its Role

### 1. All interviewees were very familiar with ACCT and its mission.

*I could quote you the RCW but that's probably not needed. ACCT works to coordinate an improve transportation series for the special needs community. It essentially is a forum to bring people together who work on this issue for agencies across the state. It has some statutory requirements and moves on multiple fronts across the state to move various independent agencies in the right direction in terms of effectively providing these services and efficiently meeting the needs of the communities they serve.*

*ACCT is a state body (committee) that was established with the idea of let's get smarter about how we are providing transportation services to special needs transportation users, and by that I mean non-fixed transit eligible folks. There is a lot of transportation going on out there, and there isn't anybody who really has a good handle on coordination. There are lots of different funding sources etc. ACCT is responsible for coordinating these different issues/entities.*

*Its role has evolved to be a formal place in state government where the interests of people with special needs transportation can be brought forward, openly discussed, and dealt with by multiple disciplines in state government.*

- 2. Nearly all interviewees stated that ACCT's role is to coordinate and improve transportation services for special needs communities. They believed that ACCT was established to better deliver efficient and effective services, which would reduce the cost of services and allow more services to be provided.**

*Eliminate duplication by increasing collaboration and a more integrated approach among providers, users and social service agencies.*

*Essential mobility services are all provided through silos—Medicaid, DART, etc. Some are local, some state, some provided by non-profits. ACCT is intended to address how we deal with the gaps, the overlaps. ACCT provides linkages and coordination.*

*Success would be to have greater visibility about what their mission is and the number of issues they're working with. Their mission has been equated with making special needs transportation cheaper, but there is so much unmet need and a growing need. The goal shouldn't necessarily be lowering total costs but lowering unit costs. They've got to communicate with people about their success and the necessity.*

*Coordination has a possibility of cost saving. The more people that can be grouped on vehicles, the more we can save.*

- 3. People stated that ACCT was created by the Legislature. Some also mentioned the role that agency staff, who had observed redundancies and opportunities for working together, played in developing ACCT.**

*It was a creature of the Legislature trying to eliminate duplication and waste in public transportation by increasing collaboration—a more integrated approach among providers, users, and social service agencies.*

*We wanted more direct resources to go to people—so our aim was to deliver those services in more efficient ways. The purpose of ACCT was to provide forum with a little bit of actual authority to look at where the barriers are and remove them. I've been around since the beginning of the program. ACCT is an organization that is charged with working with government agencies to coordinate transportation for people with special needs. It's a forum for figuring out what's happening on the ground and how to work together.*

*The goal that we were trying to meet in setting it up was to provide efficient, effective services and to help different agencies learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses. Instead of operating like silos, we wanted coordination.*

- 4. Interviewees said that a focus of ACCT should be improving institutional infrastructure so that at some point in the future, ACCT will not be necessary. The issues ACCT coordinates would inherently be a part of how agencies and institutions operate.**

*ACCT needs to help jurisdictions and agencies make special needs transportation part of their daily business. Fundamental, institutional, ground-up changes in how agencies operate so they are actually more efficient, coordinated and providing better services.*

*It should work to increase and stabilize funding, ensure stable service providers, and – this is one thing I saw during my time – is that where ACCT was able to be helpful was in eliminating some of the duplication.*

*The point I'd like to make is that the focus should be developing the infrastructure so this can happen without ACCT over time. We need help at the county, local, and state levels, and get it into the norm of doing business, so that we've made really fundamental, institutional, ground up changes in how agencies operate so that they are actually more efficient, coordinated and providing better services.*

- 5. Some interviewees said ACCT is viewed as a national model program and that Washington State is ahead of the rest of the country in terms of coordinating special needs transportation. However, they believe that there is still room for improvement.**

*Washington State has been a pioneer in this field. The state recently won an award for being innovative. The state has understood the need to cross-coordinate between all these different entities.*

*It's amazing how often I go to conferences in other parts of the county and I hear about the good things they (ACCT) are doing.*

*My interest is fairly abstract - I can't stand waste. What really drives me is that there is a possibility to provide more, better, and provide it more efficiently. I believe it is possible and it is one way to make government better.*

- 6. Some stated that if ACCT could succeed in getting agencies to include efficiency and coordination as program and reporting requirements, this type of multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency effort could be modeled in other areas, e.g., health care and education.**

*The good news is that we can do this, and if we can make it happen, the model of integrating and coordinating the silos could be used elsewhere.*



*I am one who strongly believes that we shouldn't coordinate just for the sake of coordination – but rather to save money, be efficient, share best practices – but it's absolutely true that if it's not a reporting requirement it's hard to motivate people to care about it.*

*If the legislature (which is the source of funding for the program itself) would require that when they create programs or write up the qualifications for grants, they have to address mobility it would go a long way. They could literally say, in order to get this grant, dear recipient, you have to work with the local coalition in your area. They could also require reporting and updates on how that is going. If it's measured, required and encouraged, it will actually start to happen.*

## **Priority Issues for ACCT and Special Needs Transportation**

- 7. Most interviewees felt that a number one priority is to continue providing coordination and improving the communication and efficiencies among all the various groups involved in special needs transportation.**

*ACCT can really bring the resource people at all levels together to resolve funding and policy issues. They've done well at advancing the state's objectives while realizing that the locals are not all the same. One size does not fit all.*

*We need additional resources. They might be able to help support efforts by coalitions of folks who are interested in special needs transportation and want to establish new/expanded public transit benefit areas currently not served by public transportation.*

*Coordination is the number 1 role that ACCT has helped with, and should continue to prioritize. If there isn't a lead to enforce coordination (like ACCT does), coordination would go by the wayside.*

*I do believe that there is still a role for ACCT to provide central communication, pilots, and information dissemination. ACCT recently did a really good job of codifying and developing procedures for volunteer transportation. ACCT could do a good job at coordinating these types of projects. They do a good job of bringing the right people together.*

- 8. Interviewees prioritized legislative advocacy. They wanted ACCT to continue to promote legislation that removes barriers to transportation.**

*ACCT could help identify those things that aren't working, and advocate for improving them.*

*I realize that ACCT can only advocate so far. But they can also educate and provide tools to their members who can advocate further.*

- 9. Participants hoped that ACCT will continue to provide education and technical support, especially for those organizations that don't have resources of their own. They also wanted ACCT to educate those who are not as well-versed in special needs transportation issues. ACCT should be building awareness and support about the need for these services.**

*Educate people about what's available and advocate that coordination is a good thing. The more we share resources and information, the more we will get done. They give us support in lots of good ways. They sometimes send people down to help; someone will come to evaluate programs or be a consultant when we have decisions to make, bring information to us.*

*ACCT needs to remember that not everyone fully understands all the issues in-depth. They need to consider a broader audience, and target their communications to those as well. This is important because they may be losing some opportunities by not speaking more broadly and clearly.*

- 10. Some stated that ACCT should be a resource contact for organizations throughout the state. They should be the single source of information for all agencies doing work that pertains to special needs transportation.**

*If you are within the inner circle and you talk the special needs transportation talk, then you know who to talk with and what resources are available. If you are an "outsider", or aren't as closely involved, you wouldn't know where to begin. ACCT could take a bigger role in supporting those less in the know.*

*It's just ridiculous that the transportation information system is developed locally by area rather than comprehensively by the state. People need one place where they can get information about how to effectively plan trips across jurisdictions.*

- 11. Many people mentioned the need for the expansion and availability of service and transportation resources, particularly in rural areas. They believed that ACCT has helped to improve this situation.**

*Everyone in our society who doesn't have a vehicle is challenged in terms of mobility. As a society we don't really do a good job addressing that.*

*The biggest priority is increasing the availability of transportation in rural areas, both in terms of expanding it into areas of the state where it is currently not available, but also in terms of addressing capacity constraints in areas where it is available. And eliminating access issues where it is available. That could include*

*issues of cost.*

*I see the effects of isolation on individuals and families. I'm concerned about this issue because it has to do with employment, with creating new connections and life lines for people.*

*I do think however, that there has been a lot of effort for a small amount of success. And success has only been in small jurisdictions.*

**12. Many said that they want to see more flexibility and access to special needs transportation in urban areas. They believed that ACCT has had less impact on larger programs in more urban environments.**

*In terms of special needs, we get a lot more services in the urban areas but still lack a really well oiled program to get people at lower incomes to where they need to go – for work, for medical care and so on.*

*Within the urban areas, it's the need for more flexibility in transportation – to have services running more hours of the day, more frequently and reliably on the weekends, holidays, so that people are able to be more spontaneous in their trips – making urban transportation more available.*

**13. Many said that better access to transportation for the disabled and elderly should be a priority.**

*The services ACCT is trying to coordinate are a way that families can be relieved from making transportation trips for parents. As a society we pay dearly for that if the services aren't available. In terms of our families, compromising our jobs, if we do not have these supports in a community, we are putting a lot at risk.*

*Well, I am retired now – and so on a personal note I'm getting older and starting to think about stuff like that. I understood it certainly while an employee but its particular value is now much clearer. It's a very relevant public service that needs to be provided to insure that people aren't obstructed from getting basic services, getting where they need to go, or engaging in community.*

**14. Interviewees wanted to eliminate the artificial barriers and restrictions for using different types of vehicles for different types of trips.**

*It's crazy that if you don't have a certain type of funding, you can't take a certain type of transportation or ride in a certain vehicle, especially if that vehicle is going right past your stop.*

*Continue to pursue the opportunities for sharing rides, i.e., use one vehicle to provide more trips—regardless of funding source, in areas where resources are scarce.*

*The whole funding silos situation is insane. Can't we just put it all in one pot and figure out what the needs of every community are? That would be an amazing infrastructure overhaul. If ACCT could do that, it would be bold!*

*It's all about money when the dust settles. That's why we liked to talk about the idea of the rainbow dollar. With a rainbow dollar the idea here is that every program can use remaining funds from other programs so that the funding silos start going away, and the function that agencies are trying to serve gets met without spiting each other.*

**15. Interviewees felt that the ability to share information between systems is important. The special needs transportation field needs common definitions, consistent language, and software that enables them to communicate with one another.**

*An ability and desire to share information between systems. To do that you need common definitions (consistent language), and open source software (ability for all to talk to each other – huge investment in technology). I think that these problems seem insurmountable right now for many. The Legislature would have to mandate it and provide funding.*

*It would be great for example to have standards for taxi cabs – the state has a minimum way of accounting for them, others have their own – but we need to figure out how to standardize to make these systems work. Coming up with standards for how we define the level of need of the rider, across the board statewide standards on that would be great too. Those things – those that are different and cause so much administrative hassle – would be great for ACCT to address.*

**16. Some voiced concerns about preparing for the baby boomers generation. They predicted a need to increase transportation options and education about how to use the systems.**

*We are approaching a time when baby boomers will be at an age where they are using Paratransit more. There will be a need for major expansion, which comes back to costs. We don't have the funding to meet their needs. We are starting an effort to make fixed route more easily used, which might help. But lots of these folks haven't even ridden a bus and now are finding that they can't drive anymore. They don't know how to use the service, or that it even exists.*

**17. A few participants expressed a need to increase safety for users.**

*We must be constantly pushing for a better safety record. Some programs are better than others. It is often tied to lack of funding. When programs need to cut corners, safety declines.*

*Safety is an ongoing issue. It has been a problem in some programs. In our program,*

*we have cut accident rates in about half in our program, but that is because we are very diligent and provided resources toward safety. In most cases, when safety is a problem, it is due to not enough funding. Programs cut corners, cut training etc. They don't pay drivers as much, and don't provide enough training.*

## **Structure and Membership of ACCT**

- 18. Some said that changes in government structures are necessary versus structural changes to ACCT. Many expressed frustration with the way the overall system is structured. They said that there are too many different rules, requirements and regulations at many different jurisdictional levels. They said that because of these constraints, many resources are not fully being used. Territorial issues and artificial borders impede success.**

*Each entity has established their own systems, culture, etc., and ACCT is charged with saying, let's all voluntarily change everything for the good of the order because we are going to provide more rides to people who need it. That's tough.*

*There are so many different organizations, jurisdictions, funding mechanisms, requirements, etc. It is all very confusing and overwhelming. It would be so nice to have a project submitted to one entity and have everything determined there. I'm sure there are many missed opportunities because people don't have the information they need.*

- 19. Many mentioned that it is difficult to coordinate with school districts and that there is a need and major benefits to matching up the available resources of school buses with the needs of the elderly, disabled and others within the special needs community.**

*The best example is pupil transportation. The available number of school buses outnumbers any other resources, yet most sit idle throughout the day. And school buses go far, even outside the county borders. But then they travel back without carrying anyone. It's appalling that more systems can't coordinate with school buses.*

*For example, a rural bus service would suggest using school buses that are idle during the day, paying the driver a little bit more. ACCT would decide let's put some money into it and see how it works.*

*A parallel issue is the structure of ACCT, and how difficult to it is to include SPI – there's a break down barrier between school and public transportation. It's a hugely difficult issue because of the entrenched bureaucracy between people in transportation who want to create efficiencies and provide more access, and to public school advocates.*

*Some of the biggest challenges in this field today are regulatory. For example, we need to make progress on figuring out how to utilize school buses that are just sitting there idle all day, and we need to change the regulation to allow their uses. Allowing others to use the buses could be a real benefit to school districts that are paying for that unused or underused capacity all day long. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense not to match up the need of people with the available services, but we haven't gotten there yet.*

**20. People expressed mixed feelings about where ACCT should be housed—within WSDOT or possibly in another state agency. Some wondered if ACCT would be more effective under the Office of the Governor or the Secretary of State.**

*There are advantages and disadvantages about housing ACCT in DOT. Certainly there is some efficiency in being part of a big state infrastructure. But there are also negative perceptions, territory issues, etc.*

*A change in ACCT's location might provide it with more independence.*

*If its role is to coordinate, then it needs to be independent and run on its own—versus under DOT. As you can imagine, it's pretty hard for ACCT to tell DOT what to do, where it needs to improve, and when it needs to do it, when DOT is one of the central power players at the table overseeing it's own fate to begin with.*

*The key piece was that these individuals don't have access to public transportation. Our recommendation was to position ACCT in the Governor's office, but that isn't the case, which I think is a problem.*

*I've wondered if it's perhaps better housed in the Secretary of State's office – the downside of that is that it might not get as much nurturing – the upside is that the Secretary of state is really getting a lot done in the way of efficiency and coordination, and I'd imagine that possibly just as much if not far more progress could happen from that office.*

*In Texas, the Medicaid transportation operation was moved out of social services and into transportation. This might make sense here. DOT might be more inclined to do more if it were within their own department. In Oregon, the Medicaid program simply said that wherever there is a transit agency, they will manage the special needs transportation program.*

**21. Many stated that ACCT's structure fit the usual stakeholder model, which they felt was appropriate.**

*I think that there is good representation on the council. It seems like they consider when they need to add folks, and they've done that by adding ad hoc members. That is healthy on both sides.*

**22. A few wanted to assign staff to specific regions.**

*It would be nice to have one representative who could be an expert and advocate in that region.*

*We should be willing to invest in hiring a few staff people across the state to implement and coordinate ACCT – whose job is to bridge the divides between silos – so that we aren't waiting for already overworked people to add one more thing to their plate.*

**23. Individuals suggested the following additions to the council:**

- **Directors from major federal, state and local agencies**
- **Washington state Transportation commissioners**
- **Community, Trade and Economic Development representatives**
- **Union representatives**
- **Private sector representatives**
- **Non-profit organizations like Goodwill who employee special needs populations**

*Perhaps – well, a big player like Goodwill industries – they could bring expertise to the table. And there are probably other big statewide organizations and companies that could share valuable expertise as well. Perhaps they could help. Whenever we do social service work its touchy feel but especially given the lack of funding and so on, we need to get down to business.*

*It might help to mandate that major state agency participants participated in ACCT – make it part of their job description. Make it primary role of their job. That should formalize their commitment, and show that the state is committed to ACCT and its functions.*

**24. Some suggested looking closely at the funding sources and making sure those individuals are involved.**

*If the goal is to get programs to coordinate, the people who really need to be at the table are the funding sources. If you have the providers at the table and they are thinking about coordination, there are going to be winners and losers, which will influence their decisions.*

**25. Most said that it is critical for the voting members to be the people who have decision-making authority and power within their organizations.**

*ACCT members must be the voice for their agencies, so they can truly represent their agencies. They need to come to the table with their homework done, participate, and then go back to their agency and implement.*

*ACCT must have some authority. The particular role of the Governor and the Legislature must be reflected on the board.*

**26. A few mentioned that the voting members should not be members of organizations being asked to make changes.**

*Of course there is resistance to protecting your own and resisting change.*

*That means they need more independence from the very agencies that they are supposed to be evaluating, improving and coordinating.*

**27. Some recommended that ACCT develop a rigorous orientation for new council members, including roles and responsibilities, commitment, prioritizing wider state concerns over narrow local concerns, etc.**

*New council members must have a clear understanding of the ground rules and expectations. People generally don't seem to know, or haven't bought into what their commitments are, and they aren't clear about what their agency has to gain or lose by fully participating.*

*When I first came on, the first meeting I went to, I had all these questions about it. It practically took up the whole meeting for me to get oriented, and I didn't even learn everything I needed to before stopping just so we could move on. I didn't – well I stopped, because I was like wow, this is huge. I'm used to bureaucracy but I was overwhelmed. Just getting the acronyms down is huge. Have an orientation for new members – even just a basic power point explaining the scope, the major elements of it. What I'd want to see is the whole scope of their work so I can better assess what they should focus on.*

*People need to know they are supposed to take off their local hat and put on a regional hat when they sit down at the table.*

## **Suggestions for Increasing ACCT's Success**

**28. Most interviewees said that ACCT is successful, but that they believe much more can and needs to be done.**

*I think that what we have today is a very good start.*

*I think it has room to grow in terms of creating partnerships with non-traditional entities such as hospitals, elderly, school districts and partnerships between Para transit—we can put kids on public transit. It has happened, and it could be really effective. ACCT is a very important organization. And it's all up hill – and positive - from here.*



*They have grown from a grassroots organization (an idea that was then supported by the legislature) into a group that has a more solid foundation. I think they've really gained recognition. It seems that their pilot period helped create a solid footing. I think they've been fairly successful.*

**29. Nearly all interviewees mentioned the need for a more comprehensive and powerful ACCT. They said that with the following improvements, ACCT would be much more successful:**

- **A stronger legislative mandate including:**
  - ✓ **Major state agencies should be required to participate in ACCT and include transportation as a fundamental part of their programs.**
  - ✓ **Coordination should be required performance measure for agencies, and required in grant applications.**

*It would help a lot if the Legislature would require that when agencies create programs or write up grant qualifications that they have to address mobility and transportation components.*

*We need to better integrate this type of planning because where they decide to locate new housing and job centers, where to build new lanes or not, all of that is a critical part of mobility.*

*One of the biggest setbacks has been that human services and other programs have been developed or mandated without a clear understanding of what it means to deliver people to those services. The expectations aren't realistic and the knowledge isn't great.*

*It would be interesting if OSPI and DSHS were mandated to fund half or a third of the program. If administrative departments have a financial commitment, they might pay more attention. It would also make ACCT less vulnerable to being discontinued if all three departments had financial commitments.*

*It needs to be more than a minor committee in the bowels of each organization – right now it's too much the step child, an after thought rather than a priority. Rather than picking out which agencies should continue or not to be involved, and instead of trying to make it something people care about when it's clear that will be hard in such busy agencies.*

*It's difficult because the agency doesn't have any real authority. They're just a coordinating body.*

*The Governor needs to include ACCT in the sustainability plan and GMAPPING accountability and efficiency for it to be taken seriously.*

- **Full commitment and participation from a political leaders and major agency players including:**
  - ✓ **Governor**
  - ✓ **Legislators**
  - ✓ **WSDOT**
  - ✓ **DSHS**
  - ✓ **OSPI**
  - ✓ **Medicaid**

*There is a long-overdue conversation with the Secretary of Transportation and the Governor because they really need to articulate how much, if at all, they care about this program. And if they do care about it, they need to do something to show it and make it real.*

*It's important that ACCT make sure legislators understand what is happening with special needs transportation around the state. I know what it looks like when legislators are engaged and care, and we don't have that commitment to ACCT.*

*A major battle is with the Medicaid program brokers mixing change. It's hard to come up with a system that really works. Everyone knows it is complicated and difficult to do. But maybe we should really try to make the effort. It seems there might be lots of opportunities that go untapped because there is resistance to really working that change.*

*If leaders are on board, it happens. If they aren't it doesn't. Who attends the meetings and is on the committees determines what kind of attention you get.*

*They could move faster if they were more powerful. The big members (transit agencies, social services, Medicaid, education, etc. need to be there behind the mission and participating.*

*The legislature's role is also very important. They select their own members to be representatives to the council. But again, unfortunately there is such a variety of levels participation, in terms of the knowledge base, the commitment level. I think that every program like this has to have a champion in order to succeed. I think that in that way the legislative role is important. I noticed that when legislators are at table, the state agencies definitely perked up in a way they hadn't before (not transit agencies, but state agencies). They seemed more committed, responsive, engaged. I'd hate to lose that – if we did not having legislative participation.*

*Also, we need to have ACCT get some weight or authority. The particular role of the governor's office and legislature (whether they were voting members or not) is really important to have in the room, sure there are reasons before to not have voting power – is that they can hold people accountable like none other. They can take info back and share it with colleagues – structuring budgets and programs. This could help free*

*them from the silos they're accustomed to – and provide them with more creative or incentive to build efficient, new programs that integrate needs into their budgets and program descriptions – so they hold managers accountable for delivering on those goals.*

- **Adequate, sustained and reliable funding for ACCT's internal operations and its ability to pilot innovative ideas.**

*Beyond the authorizing legislation, ACCT has no teeth, and very little budget to do its job. I believe that it is doing what was laid out in the legislation, but it could do it even better—and the need exists to do it better—with more money and power.*

*At one point ACCT lost funding to work with communities on special needs projects. It was disappointing. It was a legislative decision not to provide the funding.*

*No matter how effectively ACCT coordinates, that coordination alone is not going to be sufficient. We need additional resources.*

*I know there are some states that either through an extra fee on license plates, telephone bills, or through other means manage to establish dedicated, reliable and fairly robust funding for special needs transportation.*

*There is never enough funding. That's the real priority. And funding should not be tied to a mechanism that can be discontinued, i.e., by initiative.*

*Of course funding is a major issue. We need sustainable funding for our programs. So bringing in more funding would be a great accomplishment.*

*Originally, ACCT had the option of funding more in the way of experimental projects and learning from trial and error what might work. There was more funding available then. They were able to say, let's try it and see if that provides a solution. But funding could be sustained for these efforts.*

*Some good pilot projects are discontinued before we really know if they work.*

**30. Some suggested that ACCT work hard to develop legislative champions by:**

- **Encouraging local coalitions to work with their legislators directly. This would, at the very least, get more legislators familiar with the issues and the benefits of ACCT.**
- **Taking legislators on field trips/tours during interim. This would allow special needs transportation advocates to make person connections with legislators and legislators would see the issues first-hand.**

*They were going to have ex-officio members from the Legislature but that hasn't worked well. I'm not sure why. I don't really know what happened with the*

*Legislative representatives. They were supposed to be champions back in the Legislature.*

*I think, as always, it's a mixture of sources. First, there's not enough done at a local level – I'd like to see the ACCT council to encourage local coalitions and work with their legislators directly. We might develop some legislative champions – or at the very least get more legislators familiar with our work and its benefits.*

*During the interim we should take legislators out to see projects on the ground. We are not coordinated at a state level and that personal connection for them with our programs and with the problems that persist could be really helpful.*

**31. Most interviewees said that ACCT should develop better performance measures and indicators for the work it is coordinating. This information would help inform and drive policy choices, and it would demonstrate the benefits of coordination.**

*It's imperative to have good, appropriate, real-time cost data, customer satisfaction, and to establish what else is on our real list of weaknesses. Right now we just don't know that.*

*If we were able to gather that type of information, we'd be able to make better policy choices. But how do we know if we're fixing the right thing if we don't really know what the problems are?*

*ACCT should be able to point to improvements. In a more general sense, it would help define the problem for the state as a whole and help us to start make choices.*

*How do we measure good coordination and seamlessness? Are we developing the right action plans and timelines? And once we've done that, what RCWs need to be changed? We can't really answer those basic questions without knowing where the agency is succeeding and where it needs to be improved.*

*It would be great if they could show how coordination equals potential improvement in services, less vehicles on the road, less pollution, less fossil fuels, etc. The value of all those things would demonstrate how their coordination efforts are worthwhile.*

*There must also be cross-enterprise performance measures. To really make it a performance-based system, you have to be looking across the organizations as well as at ACCT. All the organizations need to be accountable.*

*It's always important to have anecdotal information, but facts about dollars and cents are often the entry, and they are critical.*

*We need to start gauging whether everyone is getting served, and who is not getting served, not just the number of trips.*

*ACCT is trying to develop performance measures, which is a really good idea. Pushing for performance management in government is really difficult – especially when you have a committee of organizations that haven't been very good at doing this themselves. But it is urgently needed.*

*One is basic R&D, trying to figure out models that would work better. Second is piloting those models—sort of like product development or market research. Those two things they are kind of doing now. The third thing is to begin establishing a series of standards for what the performance of systems should be—rural, suburban and urban. Then look at individual regions and agencies and begin to monitor them against the standards, and use funding to close gaps. Always focus on results. ACCT should be able to say what outcomes were produced. It's amazing the results you get when you do reporting on outcomes.*

**32. Some people said ACCT should obtain feedback from users to ensure that they are developing policies and programs that work for the users.**

*We could go out gathering the input from the stakeholders at that level, understanding what their needs are, doing our best to meet those needs with the resources we have. Then we can start assessing, are there improvements that can be made without a ton of extra costs?*

*In the past few years there's been an increase in communications from people with disabilities. They are more aware of ACCT, starting to see the reality of working with the transportation community for the benefit of people with disabilities. We've had people come in and talk to us. That's useful, puts a face to the need. It's very meaningful.*

*If ACCT was successful, you know, the major client populations would have - in surveys and feedbacks – established that they are completely satisfied with the services provided. Their major transportation opportunities and connections would give them lots of choices, those choices would have seamless connections, they would be running frequently or all the time, and they would be economical. For example, if we were really getting direct input from the users of special needs services we'd know where weakness are but right now we don't even have accurate yard sticks to measure where we're doing well and where the problems are.*

*If we were able to gather that kind of information we'd be able to make better policy choices, but how do we know if we're fixing the right thing if we don't really know what the problems are?*

**33. Many said that better integration of transportation planning and communication with the Medicaid system is needed.**

*Most specifically, there is a strong need for Medicaid to coordinate with transit.*

*I want to emphasize the need to better integrate with the Medicaid broker system. The outcome would be a more flexible and efficient set of services. I truly believe we would be able to integrate those trips.*

*ACCT has no power to really accomplish the big issues. The big members really need to participate if they are to succeed. The 3 biggies are still Medicaid, the school district, and DOT, and they just aren't at the table.*

**34. Some mentioned that ACCT needs a clearer vision and common goals.**

*It would be nice for ACCT to have a strategic vision of what they think coordinated transportation looks like. I appreciate that locals have to develop what their vision is, but the state also needs to have one—at the broader level. The locals need the guidance that an overall vision would provide.*

*Success would be to have greater visibility about what their mission is and the number of issues that they are working with. The goal shouldn't necessarily be lowering total cost but lowering unit costs. They've got to communicate with people about their success and the necessity.*

*Their goals should be reasonable in terms of being able to accomplish them within their funding, and they need to make sure that they are effective for users. I'd like to see them have a clearer, defined charge. When I look at the statute that created ACCT, it seems like their mission is all over the board. It would help if they could narrow it down and really focus.*

**35. Some interviewees said ACCT should show bold leadership and a willingness to shake up the system. They felt a hesitation for many to acknowledgment that the system needs major change.**

*I often feel like they are dancing around the parameters. I wish they were bolder. For example—say there is a problem with transporting low-income kids to schools. ACCT is likely to develop a report with recommendations on how that could be done better. This is fine, except that it is really only helpful if school districts know about the report, read the report, and have the ability to implement changes. I wish ACCT could take more proactive steps to solve the problem.*

*They need to come back with some radical things. They need to do things differently. Not all members would be happy, but they have to tell people this is the way we are going to do it.*

*I think that there is resistance from some people to acknowledge that we need to change the system dramatically. We have to take a chance, go out on a limb, and make some major change.*

## **Future of ACCT**

### **36. Nearly all those interviewed expressed strong support for ACCT's continuation.**

*It's a very relevant public service that needs to be provided to ensure that people aren't obstructed from getting basic services, getting to where they need to go, or engaging in the community.*

*I want to say that over the years, the work that ACCT has done is invaluable. Without ACCT we would not have projects on the road that we do today. We would not be where we are today without them. My biggest fear is that they would go away and there wouldn't be that coordination. Especially in this time of higher need and shrinking dollars. ACCT is the only way we are going to even maintain services, much less increase them.*

*I always felt ACCT should continue until all of this was institutionalized so that it just becomes a normal way of doing business. We aren't there yet.*

*ACCT is absolutely essential, and absolutely should be retained. Really what I'm trying to make happen is to raise the visibility and promise of ACCT – to give it higher stature out there.*

### **37. Although there was strong support for ACCT, some said that unless ACCT received a stronger commitment and mandate from the Governor and the Legislature, they questioned whether strides could be made.**

*If leadership and the major players are not committed, then let's quit and not spend more time on something that people in power aren't really invested in having it succeed.*

*Maybe continuation is warranted if there is support and commitment from state government to make sure things happen.*

### **38. A few raised questions about whether the new federal requirements (SAFETEA-LU) are duplicative of ACCT. Some voiced concerns about how the requirements will impact current efforts to coordinate special needs transportation at all levels.**

*I've begun wondering if there is any need to continue at the local and state levels if there is this federally required program. Especially since one is mandated and one is*

*not. No one wants to go to two meetings and discuss the same things.*

*There is fear and uncertainty about the new regulations. Local communities used to have to coordinate, and now that is being pushed to the regional level. There are new partners and time is needed to build up those relationships.*

*ACCT should take advantage of the fact that there are new federal programs that are requiring locally developed human service coordination and plans. There is a new opportunity for ACCT to lead.*



## Interviewees

Interviews were completed with the following individuals:

- Angela Barbre, Community Transportation Association of the Northwest
- Darlene Dickson, Skamania County Senior Services
- Dick Fondahn, Valley Transit
- Mary Margaret Haugen, Washington State Senator
- Ian Horler, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services – Workfirst
- Fred Jarrett, Washington State Representative
- Karl Johanson, Council on Aging and Human Services
- Gordon Kirkemo, Washington State Department of Transportation (formerly)
- Rick Krochalis, Federal Transit Administration
- Jacqueline Mann, Puget Sound Educational District
- Patty McDonald, Department of Social and Health Services – Aging and Adult Services
- Michael Miller, Sound Transit
- Mark Miloscia, Washington State Representative
- David O’Connell, Mason County Transportation Authority
- Toby Olson, Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment
- Karen Parkhurst, Thurston Regional Planning Council
- Eric Phillips, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Lyle Quasim, Pierce County Executive’s office
- Page Scott, Yakima Valley Council of Governments
- Sandy Stutey, Manson County Transportation Authority
- Rick Torrance, Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development
- Faith Trimble, FLT Consulting
- Deb Wallace, Washington State Representative
- Jeanne Ward, ACCT (formerly)
- Park Woodworth, King County Metro – Paratransit/Ridershare

## Appendix A: The Interview Responses

The following are all the recorded responses to questions that were posed to interviewees.

### Question No. 1

#### **Have you heard of ACCT? What is your understanding of ACCT?**

*Absolutely we've heard of ACCT. They are an organization that pulls together a number of state agencies, providers, users, to look at policy and operational issues of coordination special transportation needs. They allow dialogue across departments, state governments, and agencies that otherwise might not occur. They provide linkages and coordination.*

*Yes. ACCT's role is to assist special needs transportation providers in coordinating better with each other.*

*Of course I've heard of ACCT. I wrote the definition of special needs transportation for the state of Washington and the model for ACCT came from a committee that I co-chaired back in the early 90's.*

*I think ACCT's role should be to coordinate ALL public transportation, but that obviously isn't the case. That is because the transit systems lobbied out. ACCT should be the coordinating body for all transportation – not just special needs transportation. That was the initial idea and purpose, but by legislation it is only to coordinate special needs transportation. The definition states that it is for people that don't have access to public transportation.*

*I think there are people in ACCT that don't understand or know this history.*

*In some ways, it was reactive legislation to codify what non-profit providers could do. It expanded it so that they could provide for low-income people. The key piece was that these individuals don't have access to public transportation. Our recommendation was to position ACCT in the Governor's office, but that isn't the case, which I think is a problem.*

*The model for ACCT was really Florida – they have an independent commission (which could have worked, but has gotten politicized). Studies have showed that coordination efforts haven't worked well in any state when housed in DOT. And that is where ACCT is housed – in DOT.*

*We also wanted ACCT to be a more comprehensive and powerful mechanism. It was going to be the coordinating, regulatory, standards, insurance, etc. for all transportation. Unfortunately, due to lost legislative and funding battles, that just hasn't been the case.*

*The goal was to have ACCT coordinate all plans statewide (county by county – bottom up planning etc.) and the hope was that money would eventually come from the Legislature. This hasn't really transpired the way I hoped.*

*I-695 also had an impact as it increased money/funding pressures when it wiped out the MVET. Cuts were needed. ACCT really doesn't get very much money. It is a line item, and I think it is only about \$400,000. That really only funds staff and provides for some special projects.*

*School districts and Medicaid really haven't come to the table the way we had hoped.*

*Some of the reasons why ACCT never became what it should might include economic pressures, no mandates or strong commitments from above. I feel that ACCT has done a good job of identifying the issues, but the major players have never really become involved.*

*Of course. It was a creature of the Legislature trying to eliminate duplication and waste in public transportation by increasing collaboration—a more integrated approach among providers, users, and social service agencies.*

*Of course. Legislation was passed to put ACCT in place to coordinate special transportation services, especially for seniors.*

*Of course, I've worked with them quite a while. ACCT's role is essentially to make sure that all state agencies and programs that provide special needs transportation coordinate their efforts to provide better service, and to save money. They take resources and make sure these various agencies/entities are using them as best they can.*

*ACCT is a state body (committee) that was established with the idea of let's get smarter about how we are providing transportation services to special needs transportation users, and by that I mean non-fixed transit eligible folks. There is a lot of transportation going on out there, and there isn't anybody who really has a good handle on coordination. There are lots of different funding sources etc. ACCT is responsible for coordinating these different issues/entities.*

*There is transportation assembly in Pierce County. It is essentially a smaller version of ACCT. I assume the roles of both groups are similar – that being to maximize the number of coordinated trips using Pierce Transit, other transit vendors, etc. to get people from one place to another in a coordinated and efficient fashion. Example – if there is a Graham resident who has a dialysis appointment in Puyallup, and there is a Puyallup resident who has an appointment in Graham, we try to coordinate those trips in the most cost effective and efficient way. Now ACCT may have more responsibility than that, (I'm not as familiar with them) but from my knowledge that is their major role.*

*I believe the legislative intent was to create a body that is able to begin, or encourage, coordination among all the providers of transportation to special communities, to get*

*better services and lower costs.*

*Essential mobility services are all provided through silos—Medicaid, DART. Some are local, some state, some are provided by nonprofits. ACCT is intended to address how we deal with the gaps, the overlaps.*

*Well I know a lot about it. I could quote you the RCW but that's probably not needed. ACCT works to coordinate and improve transportation services for the special needs community. It essentially is a forum to bring people together who work on this issue for agencies across the state, it has some statutory requirements and moves on multiple fronts across the state to move various independent agencies in the right direction in terms of effectively providing these services and efficiently meeting the needs of the community they serve.*

*I've been familiar with ACCT for several years. I've worked in a couple of different professional capacities working directly with council and with organizations involved with the council. They have more of a statewide role to set the tempo of special needs transportation. They pull the right players to the table – including legislators, agency folks etc. They help organize and pull together resources to help deliver efficient and effective services.*

*They have grown from a grass roots organization (an idea that was then supported by leg) into a group that has a more solid foundation. I think they've really gained recognition. It seems that their pilot period helped create a solid footing. I think they've been fairly successful.*

*It was created by the Legislature 10 years ago. It has a board of different people—transportation, social services. It works on different coordination issues. We do a combined grant with them.*

*I worked on the legislation to create ACCT so I do know what it is, although I am retired now and have been for four years, so my sense of its current work and issues isn't as up to date.*

*I can tell you though that the reason it was created was as a forum to improve the special needs transportation services that are provided by a wide variety of state agencies. The goal that we were trying to meet in setting it up was to provide efficient, effective services and to help different agencies learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses. Instead of operating like silos, we wanted coordination.*

*I regularly attend the ACCT meetings, so yes I know who they are. As I understand it their goal is to help with increasing mobility options with people for special needs – that includes the range from disabled to elderly. We were some of the first grant recipients so I am grateful for the role they have played. And I stand firmly behind the work that they are doing.*

*Yes, I've heard of it of course because we work with them. My understanding – I believe that its purpose is to coordinate special needs transportation within the state.*

*It was created to enable the formation of a coordinated transportation system in the state of Washington. The way I see it, it was something that was talked about but this was the Washington Legislature's mandate to do something.*

*I feel that they are part of DOT that assists different areas around state in coordinating special needs transportation. They attend meetings. When funding is available they make sure the appropriate coalitions get money. They are open to what is happening in the various regions. They listen to our needs and projects and support us.*

*They also play a role at the Legislature and DOT. They do a good job of advocating for special needs transportation groups.*

*Yes I have, it was a committee set up to handle coordination issues for special needs transportation. It has authorizing legislation but beyond that it has no teeth and very little budget to do its job. I think it's doing what is laid out in the legislation. But it could do it even better – and the need exists for it to do it better - with money and teeth*

*I believe that they foster improvements in the coordination of transportation in Washington State, with a focus on special needs transportation.*

*Its role has evolved to be a formal place in state government where the interests of people with special needs transportation can be brought forward, openly discussed, and dealt with by multiple disciplines in state government.*

*Originally ACCT had the option of funding more in the way of experimental projects and learning from trial and error what might work. There was more funding available then. They were able to say let's try it and see if that provides solution. But funding level couldn't be sustained. And the Council was wise to move more to policy/technical development.*

*ACCT was also more DOT driven than it is now. There has progressively become greater buy-in by OSPI and DSHS. That is a good thing.*

*ACCT's role is to move institutional mountains in regards to special needs transportation. I think that the intent of ACCT is to coordinate different special needs transportation services in the state (funded by state and feds). That is horribly difficult because each has established their own systems, culture, etc. and ACCT is saying let's voluntarily get together and change everything for the good of the order because we are going to provide more rides to people who need it. I think everyone agrees that it is a good idea (everyone buys off). But the devil is in the details. Organizations have to change, they may have people off, they may have to lose funding, they may have to go*

*find new funding etc. It's a good idea, but not so easy to accomplish. That doesn't mean they shouldn't try. It's just going to take bold, brave leadership.*

*I think that ACCT is in jeopardy because they are not moving quickly enough. However, I think they are moving well/fast for not having a legislative mandate or teeth. But outsiders don't see that or know the reality.*

*Mandates and teeth are necessary for them to be able to accomplish things more quickly.*

*Yes, I know who they are. I know about them from direct participation at the beginning, and throughout its history. The concept behind ACCT is that there needs to be a table that anyone can come to that has to do with transportation – whether they are having transportation problems, are serving as a providing, or are a user of special needs transportation services. The idea is that we were creating a table that can represent a lot of those groups.*

*Traditionally all of those programs are operating in their own silos. The shame of that was that we have so many issues in common – and so many issues that connect us. We would find that someone or some agency, when it acted in one way, actually had an impact on someone else or some other agency. We needed to better understand the landscape of services and programs, and how we fit together or didn't. We needed to develop a common understanding of issues facing the needs we are trying to serve, and to address those needs as state rather than as each individual party. We need to focus on how all of these different places and silos can better coordinate services, save money, and ensure that people are better served. It's a forum where all of that can be discussed, hashed through, and planned.*

*Many realized there were, just in DSHS alone, all these programs that had something to do with transportation but they were not at all coordinated.*

*An example - all of these state programs were purchasing transportation from this one provider, and yet we all had different billing rates, different accounting standards, different ways of communicating, and this provider said this was just ridiculous. In his mind the state is the state, and he wondered how we could possibly have 20 different ways of doing basic business – some of us had him under contract, some were hiring him at fee for service.*

*ACCT is an organization that is charged with working with government agencies to coordinate transportation for people with special needs. It's a forum for figuring out what's happening on the ground and how to work together.*

*Yes, I have heard of it. In my understanding, its job is to advocate for special needs transportation. From my perspective it achieves this through having members and staff in the role of lobbying and education so that bills get passed and people learn more about the need for these services.*

*Yes, I have heard of it. Transportation issues touch and affect or interact across state agencies, there's a transportation piece to most of what all of us do. The issues are obviously important – especially special needs transportation – and transportation overall is important and it is very difficult to adequately address the issues without contacting and getting involved with a huge range of agencies.*

*ACCT does a good job of getting in touch with different agencies, getting input from them, and grasping the wide range of needs that exist.*

## **Question No. 2**

**What is your interest in special needs transportation? What are some of the priority issues for special needs transportation?**

*FTA funds special needs transportation in part through grant programs. There are also other federal partners (human services, etc.) that fund through Medicaid transportation grants. We want to foster that dialogue at all levels so that we can provide options to people who are dependent on special needs transportation.*

*Washington State has been a pioneer in this field. The state recently won an award for being innovative. The state has understood the need to cross coordinate between all these different entities; to work collaboratively with non-profits etc. Coordination is key.*

*It reminds me of a study GAO did of Sioux Falls around 5 years ago. Sioux Falls had all these different non-profits, govt. agencies, etc. and there was no coordination whatsoever between them. Even in a smaller city like Sioux Falls. By having coordination, Washington saves money and transportation is more efficient. Through ACCT, Washington has really tried to get out front.*

*There is a new congressional law (SAFETEA-LU) and new requirements to get federal funding. There are essentially three FTA grant programs*

*1 - Elderly/disabled*

*2 - Low-income individuals*

*3 – (New) freedom initiative – to provide service that is beyond service required under the Americans with Disabilities Act*

*There is a planning requirement attached to these requirements now. Local jurisdictions are required to develop transportation plans – that include special needs components. Locals are doing that right now (PSRC, Sound Transit etc.) These plans will outline what the priority needs are for each jurisdiction, entity etc. There will be different needs/priorities for each. We don't really know at this point what the priorities are, but the plans will help to identify them.*

*FTA has a planning framework to help guide local jurisdictions, and help them to identify their needs and gaps.*

*Special needs transportation is very expensive. If we are to continue on the present course, we will consume a higher proportion of funding than is available. Funding constraints make it difficult to expand. We are all anxious to find ways where we could provide the same amount of service at lower cost. Coordination has a possibility of cost saving. The more people that can be grouped on vehicles, the more we can save.*

*Safety is an ongoing issue. It has been a problem in some programs. In our program, we have cut accident rates in about half in our program, but that is because we are very diligent and provided resources toward safety. In most cases, when safety is a problem, it is due to not enough funding. Programs cut corners, cut training etc. They don't pay drivers as much, and don't provide enough training.*

*We are approaching a time when baby boomers will be at an age where they are using paratransit more. There will be a need for major expansions, which comes back to costs. We don't have the funding to meet their needs. We are starting an effort to make fixed route more easily used, which might help. But lots of these folks haven't even ridden a bus and now are finding that they can't drive anymore. They don't know how to use the service, or that it even exists.*

*Priority issues include:*

- *Lack of funding/economic pressures*
- *Lack of commitment and participation from major players and leaders*

*Continuing funding has got to be number one. At some point all the other issues revolve around money.*

*Increasing availability—more hours per day. It should be 24/7. Some days of the week we don't have service.*

*Service is categorically driven. Depending on a person's income, age, disability, they might get service and might not. There is a need to reduce barriers.*

*Geographically we are very limited. Walla Walla is a fairly large city, but there are not any inter-city connections.*

*There always are technical things—how to serve people with special needs, like special service animals, and wheelchairs that seem to get bigger every year.*

*People's needs and expectations far exceed the traditional concept of public transportation.*

*Client shedding by other agencies. As cost-control measures, agencies are discontinuing providing transportation for their clients and telling them to take public transportation. Funding—there's never enough. That's the real priority. Having it available throughout*



*the state. In some areas it's difficult because they are so remote, and because of a lack of services.*

*Coordination is the number 1 role that ACCT has helped with, and should continue to prioritize. If there isn't a lead to enforce coordination (like ACCT does), coordination would go by the wayside.*

*Easier access to transportation for the disabled and elderly. There are a number of reasons this is important – for their health, and if they become isolated because they can't get around, it eventually costs taxpayers.*

*Funding – it's always easy to blame lack of funding as a barrier and it seems like everyone has the same problem. But it can't be ignored. And the funding should not be tied to a mechanism that can be yanked. i.e., by initiative. Example – a blind friend of mine, voted for an initiative that essentially cut his transportation funding because he didn't know or understand the issues.*

*Without ACCT bringing these issues to forefront, they wouldn't be discussed. They are the champion.*

*Eliminating the artificial barriers that exist i.e., restrictions on funding (if you don't have a certain type of funding you can't get a certain type of transportation, even if it is available to you. There are lots of ridiculous things like this. We need to breaking down those (often artificial) barriers.*

*There are also vehicle barriers. For instance, why can't we use the same vehicles for different types for trips? I understand you don't want to mix certain populations, but again, a lot of these barriers make no sense, and money could be saved. Part of the problem is some of them are state requirements and some are federal. We don't have control over all of it.*

*We need to come up with common (one) source of information. It is okay if you are within the inner circle and you talk to special needs transportation talk. You know who to talk to, what resources are available, etc. If you are like me, and not as well-versed, you wouldn't know who to talk to or where to begin. I think that ACCT could take a bigger role in this. I think they are trying to, but they also continue to just talk to those in know. It's the others that need to information/education.*

*The priorities are pretty ordinary/mechanical:*

- *You need to get the people to understand/agree to protocols*
- *You need to make sure the necessary funding is in place*
- *You must engage the people who are utilizing the service so that you ensure that the end product is useful/user friendly to them, within the resources they you have.*

*That's hard because there are needs in every sector. Everyone in our society who doesn't have a vehicle is challenged in terms of mobility. As a society we don't do a really good job addressing that. We've developed a society that puts people at a greater disadvantage than the rest of us. I think that's wrong.*

*I am very interested in things that affect least of our brothers and sisters especially with their essential critical needs, and I am especially interested in seeing this type of multi-jurisdictional, statewide effort succeeding. I want to help this model do well and move forward to accomplish their goals.*

*I'm not so much concerned about the specific priorities that ACCT has – in terms of different kind of services in particular – and I am more concerned about the big picture, about how to get there in terms of meeting goals and developing a plan that gets us there.*

*That's a tough priority to accomplish, it's hard to do when a lot of decision makers aren't familiar with or comfortable with plans that require measurable results. We're still struggling to get good cost data – which is so basic. That should have been done over a decade ago. Along those lines we need to establish overarching goals then come up with a plan to achieve them and benchmarks to gauge our progress or make course corrections.*

*One of the big challenges is how do we measure good coordination and seamlessness? What are the numerical signs that that is working? Are we developing the right action plans and timelines? Do we have any at all? And once we get there – once we've done effective programmatic assessments, what RCW's need to be changed?*

*We really can't answer those basic questions without knowing where the agency is succeeding and where it needs to improve.*

*But right now, we're not coming up with answers and we're not on the right track to make that happen. Instead we're establishing pilot programs. We're slowly setting up tools to measure our effectiveness, but it's not happening fast enough or with enough conviction.*

*Continue to pursue the opportunities for sharing rides in areas where resources are scarce i.e., use one vehicle to provide more trips – regardless of funding source. Expand the base of transportation resources that are available (esp. in rural areas) without spending lots on money (i.e. on pilot projects that don't continue).*

*Continue to coordinate and build coalitions. ACCT really can bring the resource people at the state level to resolve funding and policy issues. And they are able to help resolve some of the federal policy issues/restrictions as well. They've done well at advancing the states objectives all well realizing that the locals are not all the same. Not one size fits all.*

*I think one of ACCT's challenges is to not get too involved in some of the local special projects. They should provide the tools and mechanisms to keep things moving but not micromanage the projects at the local level. They are good at, and should continue to support local coalition building and provide input into funding streams when possible. Essentially they should support local projects but allow them to develop at the local level.*

*Technical assistance is definitely a priority. Small non-profits don't have a lot of staff. ACCT works with organizations that don't have resources on their own.*

*Being a contact for people throughout the state—a resource center. A place you can call to find out about different things happening.*

*Working with the Legislature is huge. Making sure legislators understand what's happening with special needs transportation.*

*On a personal note I'm getting older and starting to think about stuff like that. I understood it certainly while an employee but its particular value is now much clearer. It's a very relevant public service that needs to be provided to insure that people aren't obstructed from getting basic services, getting where they need to go, or engaging in community.*

*The objective, because we have to believe and work to its possibility, is that we can and should remove transportation as a barrier to society and to life. For senior citizens and people with special needs, we need to provide them with the kind of transportation access that gives them a good quality of life. Part of that is making services more transparent. It shouldn't take loads of phone calls, internet access, or a lot of complication to figure out how to get where you need to go.*

*I see the effects of isolation on individuals and families. I'm concerned about this issue because it has to do with employment, with creating new connections and life lines for people. It's exciting to think that there's a prospect for social service agencies to work better with one another and provide more and better services for people who really need them and can change their lives with access to them.*

*I think there is a growing awareness around the level of need that exists in our community, and it is high. Major issues people are focusing on. I think there is still a belief that if transit exists in your community it is serving everyone, and though the transit agencies do their jobs really well they don't do it all, they just simply don't. And in part that is the responsible way to approach their work, because they are focused primarily on urban, dense, city and job to home kinds of commutes. The rest of us, we're left with the question of: how do we pick up these trips that cost more, are more difficult to schedule? That belief that transit should or does take care of it all is misplaced, and does a disservice to the effort to find ways to complement and complete what gaps they leave unfilled and urgently needed.*

*We have a good understanding of what makes sense to invest in and change, but they are the ones with the funding. We don't have sustainable funding. Instead we rely on grants which aren't always consistent or reliable. That makes it really difficult to maintain consistent programs, level of service, and to make the staff time and investment in new ways of operating. Sometimes we get a program that's launching with some success cut off, and it discourages change.*

*Another is that as much as DSHS has been at the council, and at the committee level, we are doing not at all a good job of coordinating with Medicaid – and the shame of it is that we have real opportunities there. I understand that they have to stay true to their mission and funding sources – but I'm sure that with some pushing from high up people, the rigidity there could be relaxed. Some work we've done in past, and that we've done in some other places, shows the real benefits of having someone with authority in the agency say, "Yes, this is worth trying," and then having the staff follow through. They have good resource and together we have a lot of ideas to share and ways to create efficiencies.*

*Our priority seems to be providing transportation to people with serious medical kinds of needs and for people who need to make it to social service appointments. I'd say that we've had difficulty meeting the needs of low income people who are trying to get to employment centers.*

*But I think that is probably a challenge throughout the state. I have elderly parents in the Puget Sound area who don't have nearly the level of services that we give to. We have more resources per capita here. Our county government contributes additional dollars.*

*I definitely have a feeling that this [special needs transportation] is one of the most important elements of public transportation. We have to assure people without alternatives that they have the opportunity to get around. It's a growing concern. For people who are aging, the need is just around the corner—that makes it very personal to me. Society has to find a solution, and we have limited resources. Public transportation has been considered a leader in special needs transportation even though there are other providers—nonprofits, taxis.*

*There are a lot of resources. The best we work with is pupil transportation. The available number of school buses outnumbers any other resources, yet most sit idle throughout the day. We are doing unnecessary duplication, and it goes beyond the normal problem of duplication. School buses go far, even outside the county borders, and dead-head home without carrying anyone. It's appalling to me that our system is the only one that coordinates with school buses. When school buses are parked we put on a Mason County Transit sign and use them. We're still the only ones in the state and maybe in the nation. And when I've testified about that in committees, I have encountered a hostile reception from school representatives. With fuel costs increasing and tax dollars decreasing, we have to make the most of our resources. We've got to crack that barrier. The need is*

*growing as the population ages, and we can't institutionalize people because they can't get to a doctor. We have to make sure people can get the services they need.*

*Funding – not only amount of funding, but also the fears around funding. There have been changes – SAFETEA-LU - local communities used to have to coordinate, but now coordination is being pushed to the regional level. There are new partners. Time is needed to build up those relationships, which aren't there like they are at the local level. This is creating less coordination and more competition. It is unsettling. There are unknown relationships, which always leads to distrust. We are starting from scratch again on our relationship building. ACCT could help foster those relationships and work together to build relationship.*

*The No Child Left Behind Act has also created problems – there's a huge need but it is an unfunded mandate. Our numbers are increasing at rate where the districts can't provide services. We need to come up with a system that provides transportation, but does not take away from other school services. Right now we are in an either or situation.*

*Low-income families are finding themselves in a similar situation where they have to choose transportation over other essential services like food. Transportation systems are being pushed further out and gas prices are rising. It's becoming a larger issue than ever.*

*At its core, the base issue is coordination – there's a lot of duplication with transit and service agencies and we could make a lot of head way in providing more and better service if we coordinate, are not redundant, and are more innovative.*

*The biggest is increasing the availability of transportation, both in terms of expanding it into areas of the state where it is currently not available, but also in terms of addressing capacity constraints in areas where it is available. And eliminating access issues where it is available. That could include issues of cost.*

*I think that the biggest set-backs have always been that human services and other programs have developed or been mandated without a clear understanding of what it means to deliver people to those services. The expectations are not realistic and the knowledge isn't great. There haven't been upfront discussions about who will provide those services. The responsibility was placed in the lap of public transportation, and human services saw it as a way out – the could take the dollars and put them somewhere else. Minimum standards were applied (mandated by ADA), but they do not meet the needs of those people that special needs transportation. It falls short and nobody is really willing to have that discussion – which has to happen to solve it.*

*Another issue is that one size does not fit all. The issues facing counties around the state are somewhat different throughout the state. And there are definitely differences between urban, rural etc. There are different challenges. Problems are multi-faceted, and therefore solutions must be too.*

*The altruistic one is that I believe in access for everyone and quality of life. Being able to get around is important and should be available to everyone.*

*The selfish one is I'm 40, and in 30 years or less, I'm going to need a good transportation system. My folks are getting to that point now. A Citizens centric position is I believe that they are large cost efficiencies that could be gained. It is a wise use of taxpayers of dollars.*

*An ability and desire to share information between systems. To do that you need common definitions (consistent language), and open source software (ability for all to talk to each other – huge investment in technology). I think that the problems seem insurmountable right now for many. The Legislature would have to mandate it and provide funding.*

*You need an agreed upon allocation model – all need to agree upon how savings will be split. Then it could be implemented by the above system.*

*Staffing and resources are necessary. They need to institutionalize this work and vision within their own organization. It's too big to not have it within.*

*We must have cross enterprise performance measures. If ACCT is really performance based, that is great. To really make it a performance based system, you have to be looking across the organizations as well as just at ACCT. All the organizations need to somehow be accountable. ACCT needs to say, "We need to know this information – ya'll figure out how to do it." And here is some money to help you do it.*

*My interest is fairly abstract - I can't stand waste. What really drives me is that there is a possibility to provide more, better, and provide it more efficiently; I believe it is possible and it is one way to make government better. It was absolutely clear that it is wasteful to do it as we were doing it, wasteful to tax payers and to the people we could otherwise serve if we were operating more efficiently.*

*In terms of priorities, there are so many. I think that probably number one is service in rural areas. And just overall giving more transportation options to the people in rural areas. And then number two is, within the urban areas, it's the need for more flexibility in transportation – to have services running more hours of the day, more frequently and reliably on the weekends, holidays, so that people are able to be more spontaneous in their trips – making urban transportation more available.*

*I think that money stands in the way in one aspect and that is that there is such a reluctance to fund people – what I mean by that is that where you see something happening where things are moving forward, there are people who are dedicated to the task and to their job – be it a consultant or a staff person to do their job – and everyone has to absorb these new goals or programs it into their existing work plan. That's not really a great model, because it's not fair to existing programs, to the staff running them,*

*or the people left needed services. On the county or region level, there should be a person whose job it is to move the coordination agenda forward. We should be willing to invest in hiring a few staff people across the state to implement and coordinate ACCT – whose job it is to bridge the divides between the silos – so that we're not waiting for already overworked people to add one more thing to their plates.*

*People are being asked to do amazing things in trying to absorb things into their own jobs, and generally they step up and make it happen. But the reality is that they can't do the amount and kind of work they need to for ACCT to succeed.*

*The shame of it is that there's incredible reluctance to say we are going to fund a body, an actual staff person, so in terms of coordination that is a big one, there has to be a dedicated person whose job it is to do this. Without that people just pick away at it without making huge progress, and it is huge progress that is needed.*

*The other big thing ACCT needs is the commitment of leadership – or to address the missing commitment if you will. If leaders are on board it happens. If they aren't it doesn't. So far, I've seen leaders come and go. Who is there at the meetings and on the committees determines what kind of attention it is getting. If the government had it as part of GMapping you bet it would get attention – and it needs more.*

*Unfortunately within transportation it is always the bottom priority. It doesn't rise to their attention enough that they actually start to ask the questions. And they don't communicate on an ongoing basis about how to get leaders involved. How to get managers really taking these issues seriously and being measured for the work they are doing and how improvements are being made.*

*The clients I work with, as a group, don't usually have good transportation – either access to it or information about it. The bottom line is that the transportation we provide is essential for them in order to have access to employment opportunities. It also relates to doctors appointments and other critical life basics, like being able to pick up children after work and get home.*

*In terms of issues, I'd say the biggest sector still needing services are the rural areas where the needs are the greatest and the resources are the least.*

*Some of the biggest challenges in this field today are regulatory. For example, we need to make progress on figuring out how to utilize school buses that are just sitting there idle all day, and we need to change the regulation to allow their uses. Allowing others to use the buses could be a real benefit to school districts that are paying for that unused or underused capacity all day long. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense not to match up the need of people with the available services, but we haven't gotten there yet. That's a great place for ACCT to step up and help bring the various groups together to resolve a potentially really beneficial arrangement.*

*I think that some of the biggest issues are the hours of service and general accessibility, and frequency, of transportation services for people with special needs. The other big challenge is in funding – the irony being that if we don't invest in these programs, people are left stranded, unable to be working members of society, and end up being more burdensome on society. They have to make home decisions, critical choices, and we should be able to provide them with better ones.*

*The way I'd answer is that our agency is very broad in its mission. We deal a lot with disabilities, community development and community planning. They aren't specific to my program area but to our agency as a whole – as we work on growth management, community assessments, and economic development. Transportation is a key in development, and for where growth happens.*

*Urban sprawl or suburban sprawl – these are big issues today in special needs transportation. Not a lot of the public transportation we have can handle disabilities – especially in rural areas it's a big issue.*

*I think that we're spending a lot of resources to get people who are on Medicaid to where they need to go and it's not an efficient use of state resources. We don't deal with it very well. It all ties into sprawl and development in non-urban areas. Transportation in general – we're doing a good job at that. Lots of factors go into it – funding, what people are willing to spend.*

*In terms of special needs, we get a lot more services in the urban areas but still lack a really well oiled program to get people at lower incomes to where they need to go – for work, for medical care and so on. Getting people back into urban areas for those services and opportunities from rural areas is also a big challenge. Not all of the people who need to get somewhere are able to by any means.*

### **Question No. 3**

#### **What should ACCT do to support special needs transportation?**

*Foster the communication and coordination across agency and government lines.*

*Help conduct workshops and provide information around state.*

*Be the link to all the different entities. Speak with many agency voices. Act as a steering committee.*

*Especially help those smaller, less sophisticated areas (rural areas, tribes etc.) who need more technical help and don't have as many resources. King County has more resources, and is more sophisticated, and therefore might not need as much help or different help (although they need help to).*



*We aren't really as close to the issue. ACCT essentially seeks information from us. That is our role.*

*ACCT is trying to develop performance measures, which is a really good idea. FTA could use that information on the national level. And could use it for modeling in other states.*

*We represent four other states and most of those states don't have a similar ACCT agency. We see a world of difference when there isn't a similar organization. Those states are less functional. We see a huge difference in the work that ACCT provides Washington State.*

*They have been issuing grants, which is a good thing. The problem is that there hasn't been enough money to impact the larger programs. They have had success with smaller programs, in smaller cities, and that is good – they should continue that. To tackle bigger problems however, and to help the larger programs and cities, they'll need more money, which I don't think there is.*

*I suppose that there is probably more that the state could be doing internally to solve this problem. If State leaders prioritized and mandated certain things (i.e. Medicaid program has avoided coordination), there might be more success. I suppose ACCT could internally lobby the Governor and other state leaders to make it happen.*

*ACCT does assist coordination in smaller settings – but, again, I don't believe that they have had an impact in large cities. Again, the Governor's strong mandate is missing.*

*ACCT has limited resources. Their smaller grants just don't have impact in large settings. It just isn't enough, and therefore isn't helpful in the large counties.*

*Unfortunately ACCT doesn't have the power to address some of the issues/problems that really hinder success.*

*I do believe that there is still a role for ACCT to provide central communication, pilots, and information dissemination. ACCT recently did a really good job of codifying and developing procedures for volunteer transportation. ACCT could do a good job at coordinating these types of projects. They do a good job of bringing the right people together.*

*Other projects could include driver training standards.*

*I don't want to see ACCT sunset. There have been key elements have been lost but there is still a need.*

*Continue efforts to remove barriers in general. These may be legislative in nature. Categories of money can limit who we can serve. Medicaid transportation can be*

*difficult. And Job Access—if you pick up one person for Job Access you can charge the full cost, but if you pick up another person on the same trip, you can charge only 50-50 to Job Access. But if the second person can't afford the 50 percent, we have to cover that. So it makes financial sense for us to refuse service to the second person.*

*Continue education and technical support. Educate people about what's available and advocate that coordination is a good thing—more can get done if we share. Provide technical assistance in the nuts and bolts of coordination. In the past ACCT provided staff and demonstration grants.*

*They did some real good work early on. But frankly, since then I've been disappointed. They haven't done as much as other states. They haven't used brokers as effectively. There have been turf battles. Brokers are supposed to manage this, but sometimes they give contracts to the same people as before instead of the most cost-effective. They must be cost-effective with the limited amount of funding.*

*Coordination – as I've mentioned.*

*They should continue doing the innovative and special projects that I believe they are already working on i.e., smart card project; they are doing something with Google that helps people figure out what transportation is available in specific areas. More of these types of project should be continued.*

*They could also play a big role in emergency management preparedness. It makes sense because transportation is such a big issue in what happens after a disaster. They could assist the Governor and others in emergency management planning.*

*Unfortunately funding resources are often the barrier in the types of projects ACCT (or other agencies) can take on. They can only do so much.*

*An important role is coordination, but it is also getting those outsiders like me more informed, educated, and encouraged to become more knowledgeable and involved.*

*They could help identify those things that aren't working (barriers), and advocating for improving them. I'm talking about some of the barriers that we can fix. I realize that ACCT staff can only advocate so far, but they have the ability to coordinate allies (or their members) to advocate for these issues.*

*They need to make sure that the big players – schools, transportation authorities, and DSHS (they serve the biggest population) – are at the table and coordinated. Prompt: Do you think that ACCT is doing this? I'm not sure. I do know that in Pierce, the schools have been very accommodating. And Pierce Transit has a new director who has started investing in the meetings and they appear to be helpful. It seems like our biggest problem is with DSHS. I realize that they have lots of issues, but quite frankly, it is doable, and if it is a priority, they need to get it done.*

*That's a challenge because ACCT is not a transportation provider. In my five years with them I've noticed that they've shifted away from a programmatic approach to figuring out what outcomes we're looking for. It's difficult because the agency doesn't have any real authority. They're just a coordinating body. They have meetings, give some grants.*

*By programmatic I mean that people would say, "Here's a good idea—let's pursue it." For example, a rural bus service would suggest using school buses that are idle during the day, paying the driver a little bit more. ACCT would decide let's put some money into it and see how it works. The problem is there was no knowledge gained about how good the ideas were. No measure of the outcome.*

*In my mind, the first thing it should do is clearly articulate the vision, goals, and performance indicator/measures of what we have to do.  
What are the action plans and focusing on action plans to.*

*Everything in my mind boils down to vision – commitment – and planning/execution – which government tends data driven, goal oriented solutions.*

*A lot of what they've been doing so far. They could use more staff. Sometimes I feel like they get stretched a little thin, can't cover all the bases.*

*It should work to increase and stabilize funding, ensure stable service providers, and – this is one thing I saw during my time – is that where ACCT was able to be helpful was in eliminating some of the duplication.*

*You know, in government our model structure for agencies is to act as vertical silos – there are senior silos, disability silos, low income silos – and the reality is that we have limited resources to meet the needs of the target group being served by each silo.*

*With ACCT, part of the idea is grounded in the honest assessment that there is a significant amount of duplication, and thereby a loss of possible resources – and that is unnecessary. I – we – those of us developing the program, wanted more direct resources to go to people – so our aim was to deliver those services in more efficient ways.*

*The purpose of ACCT was to provide forum with a little bit of actual authority to look at where the barriers are and remove them.*

*There are and have been difficulties in achieving that purpose. Wrapped around these silos there are defense mechanisms that make them unable to see the process in any way other than as an attack to be repelled. In retrospect the biggest mistake we made was in structuring AACT itself. Conventional wisdom when creating councils is that you put the affected parties in effective parties in group they can be there protecting interest.*

*I think the clear next step is to restructure the council. We need to remove the structure that's causing people to react defensively or not act at all, and instead need a group of people that don't walk in the room thinking: How do I protect my job, my job title, and so on? We need a group that is invested but can be more objective.*

*An important part of their structure, particularly from the legislature, their interest in this and what they learn, take back when they review budgets and leg – they have leverage others don't the better*

*They would be able to ask better, more perceptive questions. See model beyond just transportation – do it in other areas. DSHS – education, training, health care, access, better coordinated fashion.*

*Picture this – all of the programs being funded are functioning as silos – so you have your senior silos, your drug and alcohol silo, your Medicaid silos, the disabled silo – now stand them up side by side – that's our state programming structure. And now you have a newer movement where our state is concerned about efficiency – but instead of looking at the system as a whole they're looking at each silo and make it perform vertically – side to side - use of public funds more effective – access points across – obliged or could collaborate – case workers is that a logical.*

*There's an entrenched status quo for how business is done in this state, some people use it as a hammer, it's just nature of how its set up – change is scary to everyone – all the progress we've made will be lost – run to their legislator – then the legislator goes knee jerk with their reaction, it's sort of a predictable thing.*

*Their role as advocates in the legislature – at the state and federal level – is absolutely critical. I know that they are public employees, and are publicly funded organizations – so their ability to articulate the multidisciplinary actions that are needed to make these kinds of programs work – the full range of programs, including transportation, land use, and so on – is a critical role. I think ACCT is doing a good job of advocating for our work and their work but could do it even better.*

*The reality is that working together requires a better understanding on the part of the legislature about what kind of needs are being tried to be met and why the results of our program look and seem different from other programs. It's essential for legislators to know that our special needs services can't be compared to school busses or commuter busses – the level of difficulty and the critical nature of this work.*

*There are also important issues around disaster management – that is a key message – especially when trying to communicate with policy makers who jump at the opportunity to address safety and have a legal obligation to do so. Disaster management agencies can be a helpful tool, and ACCT has started to do a great job supporting these needs with joint work and technical programs.*

*When we're having trouble with this or that, ACCT come in on the scene. The local*

*agency directors support it and really believe in the value it brings.*

*I think that we have problems in the ACCT council in attracting or encouraging people to be true champions. Often when I come to meetings, people aren't feeling it's an important priority within their own agency or organizations. They either don't have the authority – or desire – to jump in and make the changes happen.*

*What I think they should do is what they are doing right now. They give us support in lots of good ways. They sometimes send people down to help – someone will come to evaluate programs or be a consultant when we have decisions to make, bring information to us.*

*For example, we're thinking of forming a PTBA and they sent a person out to meet with us and to explain that process to us. I believe they provide training opportunities for drivers and people who supervise drivers. Maybe that's another agency, I can't really remember, but I think that's something ACCT does.*

*They have done really well in creating dialogue. It's a very important topic. [Prompt: dialogue between whom?] The dialogue is among selected groups—agencies—not broader communities. That might be where they can improve communication.*

*They should continue to advocate legislatively – promote legislation that might improve the situation.*

*There is a still lot of duplication happening out there. Legislation could help that, and ACCT could take a lead/advocate. They already do this, but they could do it even do more.*

*They need to continue with their coordination efforts/role.*

*Again, I think they're doing a pretty good job. They're always available for technical assistance, and they make good use of limited dollars. I think there's a lot more they could do if they had more money and more power. I – mainly because my programs have a good budget – haven't used ACCT very much but I've referred other people and agencies to them. I'm also on the steering committees for the transit working groups of the three counties that we operate in.*

*They should be developing and supporting initiatives to expand the availability of accessible and affordable transportation throughout the state.*

*I'll give you a couple of examples of problems. Public school transportation travels along more roads than any other transportation system. It is an awesome network that is available 2 times a day/9 months a year. Is there a way to utilize that better? I realize there are problems with mixing of students and general public etc., but can we get some out of the box thinking? There might be some solutions. ACCT could help.*

*Another area is in the design and delivery of human services – there is always a transportation component. Transportation must always be at the table when discussing these issues. But there are competing priorities. It needs to be figured into whole societal cost. It needs to be a part of the conversation. ACCT is getting some play in that arena and that should continue.*

*ACCT has done a pretty good job of teaching some public members to be better advocates in presenting their issues to policy makers – both at the local and state level. They have given folks the tools, helped them to quantify information, etc. They have developed skills with those people who can be advocates.*

*There are a lot of things that could be done for special needs transportation. There are services improvements that they want. More frequent service, same day trips, good drivers etc. I see these things as local providers' responsibilities.*

*ACCT's role is more of the systems things that I've been talking about. Help develop systems broadly. Track performance. They shouldn't get into the business of the individual agencies; they should be looking at the higher level, statewide.*

*Well first, ACCT does a lot of great work already. Where do I think there could be more focus? I think there could be more leadership through ACCT at pulling the forums together to develop and reach common agreement on reporting requirements for all of the agencies that fund transportation because they all have their different things that they want to report, different times and data to collect. Anyone who is trying to get the funding that ACCT or other granting agencies are doling out has to juggle all of the different requirements and spend excessive amounts of staff time dealing with reporting requirements. And then the real shame is after all of that time and energy is spent, I'm telling you seriously that those reports are required but are never used.*

*I strongly suggest that there should probably have to be an evaluation at the federal, state and local levels of all the requirements out there so that we can figure out: what do people really use in the way of information, what do elected officials need to see or think they need to see, what is the easiest way to do the reporting, what are the meaningful numbers? Then we should work to institute coordination of whole reporting cycle. That way the same data gets collected, the reporting cycle is the same – if ACCT could take a leadership role that would be great.*

*It would be great for example to have standards for taxi cabs – the state has minimum way of accounting for them, others have their own – but we need to figure out how to standardize to make these systems work. Coming up with standards for how we define the level of need of the rider, across the board statewide standards on that would be great too. Those things – those that are different and cause so much administrative hassle – would be great for ACCT to address.*

*It needs to bring people together across agencies, in cities and counties, not just the state government. It should also include and work with Community Based Organizations and other people working to serve special needs transportation to try to address this issue globally. And then ACCT should represent all of these groups with legislation to advance our coordinated goals in the legislative session. In that way, ACCT's efforts to coordinate these groups will allow the organizations to function to provide services more effectively and efficiently.*

*Really, issues ranging from liability issues to alleviating boundaries between service providers – as a forum and as an advocate on these issues, ACCT can be and should continue to be even more helpful and active. For example, we've been pushing for changes to the stretcher bill – because medical transportation providers have in the past always staffed the ambulances or other vehicles with full specialists as if ready for emergency care, but in reality a lot of people need to be transported by stretcher but do not need any of those other services. The transportation companies end up making hand over fist profits without actually being needed.*

*The legislation we were pushing for was to allow people without medial needs to have stretcher access. Part of it passed but not all of it completely. ACCT has been the champion. This is a function that ACCT can provide. They can do a lot to add more weight to an issue that needs to be advanced. It's pretty straightforward – that when you have a big organization, with lots of representation, it's far more powerful than a each small CBO or local entity going out individually and trying to make changes happen. The collective power of ACCT is an asset that should be leveraged.*

*I think we need a massive public education effort so that the public can advocate for and better understand the needs that exist. We need to spread the word – the truth – that although today you might not be using our services, tomorrow someone you know or you yourself may be. The difference is, with this issue, that in addition to explaining the needs we need to show what people have happen to them when they're cut off from community – and basic social, medical, and other needs cannot be met. It's not a pretty picture – financially or morally – when we leave people stranded like that.*

*I think that we need better advocacy at all levels of government. I'm not aware of advocacy at local level. When decisions are made on transit and paratransit, who is there to make sure they are the right decisions? Who is there to educate those local decision makers about the effects that their choices have? Was there any advocacy going out to city officials when they cut funding? It's not likely. The shame is then you have decisions made out of ignorance. Transit boards don't ride transit. They don't connect one plus one which makes it critical for ACCT to educate.*

*I may be wrong but it seems like the local piece is not happening – there should and could be more visibility around special needs. It can be done a lot of different ways. Maybe it's that it's not being done, but that more could be done. ACCT could do a better*

*job of utilizing all of the partnerships available, with public, private and non profit entities in the field.*

*I think it should continue to seek public input. They send out proposals to us and – well, beyond that, I’m a little confused – there’s PACT, and I’m not really sure what ACCT does as compared to them.*

*Cooperation does matter and is a good thing for ACCT to work on but it’s a really difficult task to get people together in the same room, on the same page, and to come to joint decisions. It’s a pretty thin team here, for example. We’re an agency that passes 90% of our work off to contractors. We’re staff thin and we don’t have a lot of bodies to go outside of our narrow focus and what we do to participate in this. That’s just an example of one of ACCT’s members who can’t fully commit to making their mission happen.*

*With the emphasis on showing how we’re using out state money – GMAP or priorities of government – it’s really difficult to capture and justify spending a lot of time outside what our funding sources are looking for us to do. It’s not a unique challenge to us. The idea of ACCT – and of government coordination - is good but it’s really challenging to get meaningful buy in from agencies when it’s not part of our mission and it’s not part of our measured outcomes.*

*It helps our stakeholders, we see the value in it, but it gets down to a general problem where the issue of transportation touches all these agencies – it would be great to get all this done but I don’t know if we can.*

#### **Question No. 4**

**In your estimation if ACCT was successful, what would that look like?**

*I think you’d want to start with the folks who are receiving the benefits – the folks with special needs. They would have access to the services they need, it would be efficient, and you would be able to measure somehow an improvement in efficiency. We could go out gathering the input from the stakeholders at that level, understanding what their needs are, doing our best to meet those needs with the resources we have. Then we can start assessing, are there improvements that can be made without a ton of extra costs?*

*I don’t know a ton of the nuts and bolts but what I’ve seen fundamentally is we will have a meeting on this, here’s the document, and I send it out to stakeholders. I’m not really familiar with the results of the meetings.*

*The public could better identify, conversationally and in their overall outlook on the world, the need for accessible transportation. The local elected officials would not look at it as second tier set of services but as primary services. It would be seen as a primary concern of legislature. Awareness can equal power.*



*We would have more money available. We've been successful – through ACCT, and through its subsidiaries, to go out to communities and get really great programs happening on the ground, and providing services to people who have been waiting for a long time. And we've been providing these services efficiently.*

*While it's great to start with these efforts, once they are proven to be successful, the big question still out there is how to get the sustained funding to keep them going. Once these programs are proved to succeed, the need for them continues beyond the 2 years of the grant. ACCT could help secure and stabilize funding so that good programs and pilot projects are rewarded and actually put in place more permanently.*

*The support for local communities and helping them along - ACCT does what it can with grants technical funding and assistance and other work such as that. I think that the whole trip planner thing drives me nuts because one of the things we hear again and again out in the communities is the lack of information. People do not have easy, understandable ways to plan their trips. They simply can't find out how to use the resources we have because our trip planner services are so regionalized and inaccessible.*

*The question I keep asking is how do we effectively get trips planned across jurisdictions? Who crosses jurisdictions? How do we make connections with those agencies, and how do transportation users figure out what happens when they're trying to cross into the next county? It's just ridiculous to me that the transportation information system is developed locally by area rather than comprehensively in the state. There is so much cross jurisdictional travel. There is so much duplication in setting up these trip planners. And yet there's no good way to really figure out how you get from one area to another. That would be a huge success for ACCT, to create a statewide, user friendly, trip planner.*

*If they could even get some coordination – and this idea could originate in ACCT and be overseen by them, that could be great. But unfortunately the project got taken over by IT people and it has never seen the light of day.*

*It's been 6 years or more that the state technical folks have been working on this and promising it would be done. We just need one tangible, efficient way to get people to know how to use the services.*

*They would have a legislative mandate, political power, and the appropriate funding to accomplish their tasks.*

*It would be nice for ACCT to have a strategic vision of what they think coordinated transportation looks like. I appreciate that the locals have to develop what their vision is, but I also think that the state has to have a vision – at the broader level. It can't just be patchwork of local's visions. The locals need guidance and an overall vision that they can work with. So that we are all have some common vision.*

*I think they have done a really good job of honing it down. They are really developing a work plan/message that can endure for a while. I feel there is more credibility and professionalism than ever. ACCT is growing up.*

*I wonder if there are any peer type organizations that they can learn from. Best practices that they could model. Maybe they have done it. They are a pretty savvy group; I would think if those groups were out there, they would have looked at them. And Washington state is a leader in the field of special needs transportation, so I'm not sure there are other organizations around the country that they could learn from.*

*It would have the right people at the table They should continue to promote coordination of resources.*

*It would be mandatory that all human service and transportation agencies were required by the state to coordinate their special needs transportation service. In their perfect role they would have money to monitor and coordinate – and to give out and manage grants.*

*Success would be to have greater visibility about what their mission is and the number of issues they're working with. Their mission has been equated with making special needs transportation cheaper, but there is so much unmet need and a growing need. The goal shouldn't necessarily be lowering total costs but lowering unit costs. They've got to communicate with people about their success and the necessity.*

*What they are doing they are doing well. They've always been helpful to us. So I can't comment on what it would look like other than that.*

*Of course funding is a major issue. We need sustainable funding for our programs. So bringing in more funding would be a great accomplishment.*

*They would also be successful if they were able to create more integration of special needs in organizations and agencies across the region.*

*Anecdotally, for example, someone might create in the rural community a program for young mothers – and get a grant source through state – but have no mention of how people are going to get to this program. If the idea of coordinating transportation was inherent in all programs, then these kinds of major oversights wouldn't happen.*

*If the legislature (which is the source of funding for the program itself) would require that when they create programs or write up the qualifications for grants, they have to address mobility, which would go a long way. They could literally say, in order to get this grant, dear recipient, you have to work with the local coalition in your area. They could also require reporting and updates on how that is going. If it's measured, required and encouraged, it will actually start to happen.*

*Special needs transportation is isolated as a separate program too much of the time, so ACCT still has room to improve in terms of making transportation a fundamental part of many programs.*

*If ACCT was successful, as a senior citizen to be in a few years I would know exactly how to get where I need to go and feel assured that a good program was in place to meet those needs. In fact, right now I'm in the process of moving my parents into assisted living – in large part because there was no transportation where they lived – and it was a really traumatic experience for everyone. My brother, sister and I really had to put so much of our lives on hold, and it was upsetting for my parents to leave their community and be so debilitated by the lack of infrastructure.*

*In the ideal scenario, everyone is familiar with how the system works – and that like libraries, there's great transportation, every community has them – sufficient resources – don't have to make a dozen calls, call one number. It should be available universally across the state, in rural and in urban areas. For transportation needs, getting service shouldn't be about or trapped in that divide.*

*I think that ACCT can help in planning how local agencies provide the appropriate level of service for a certain area. There should not be senior ghettos or disabled ghettos because we can't sustain providing them services out in the community. We shouldn't ostracize people because of their choice (or quite often the reality is they don't have the choice) about where to live, and to be frank it can be easier on limited budgets to live in rural areas. In the bigger picture we need to address that divide.*

*It's all about money when the dust settles. That's why we liked to talk about the idea of the rainbow dollar. With a rainbow dollar the idea here is that every program can use remaining funds from other programs so that the funding silos start going away, and the function that agencies are trying to serve gets met without spiting each other.*

*In the current structure, each need gets a color – a red person (say that stands for elderly) needs a red dollar, a blue person (say that stands for a disabled person) needs a blue dollar – but if we make every dollar a rainbow dollar we won't say "sorry red person, even though there are blue dollars remaining, we don't have any red ones yet so we can't meet your needs." If we've got a limited amount of green left but blue needs them, we shouldn't say no way. The question then is how do we manage and account for that? If funding is monochrome, the funding source wants to show in reports what they've delivered and they become tremendously proprietary about their funding and accomplishments. It's worth trying especially in the realm of special needs transportation, to make the dollars rainbow dollars.*

*Accountability can be another big challenge. If we say we provided X number of trips vs. X number of senior trips, an agency might not be getting all the credit it wants to promote its work and ensure future funding. But I strongly believe we need to start gauging whether everyone is getting served – and know how many didn't get served. In that way,*

*the funding is a big part of the picture and it goes back to the organization of all of these agencies because they have burdens of organization and rules. Even though an individual staff person might be sympathetic to this broader goal of being more efficient and effective in meeting all needs, the reality is that to get funding in the next cycle they have to stick very narrowly to their mission and that change takes time.*

*Setting goals and accomplishing them. They've always been good, but especially in the last three years—but maybe I feel that way just because I've been working with them more. The board came together as a group more and talked about performance measures.*

*I think that what we have today is a very good start. I would like to see a little more empowerment and confidence that the board is here to stay. I think it is sometimes hard on the state members to not feel like the board might go away. It would provide longer term decision making credibility if they knew they were going to be around. I realize and understand the dynamics in world of appointed political positions, and how hats are changed politics. As much as those politics could be tempered would be good. Try and provide as much continuity as possible.*

*More involvement/commitment from the Governor's office would be helpful. It's better than what I expected, but could still be better. I would like to push it – I'm ambitious.*

*If ACCT was successful, you know, the major client populations would have - in surveys and feedbacks – established that they are completely satisfied with the services provided. Their major transportation opportunities and connections would give them lots of choices, those choices would have seamless connections, they would be running frequently or all the time, and they would be economical.*

*Local government has proactive account system to address problems all the time, as their constituencies are more localized and make their voices heard. But sometimes with an agency so big – or a group of agencies – it's harder to get a sense of where to share feedback and how to track it.*

*For example, if we were really getting direct input from the users of special needs services we'd know where weakness are but right now we don't even have accurate yard sticks to measure where we're doing well and where the problems are.*

*If we were able to gather that kind of information we'd be able to make better policy choices, but how do we know if we're fixing the right thing if we don't really know what the problems are?*

*I think another thing we need to better understand – and to make happen once we understand it – is how encourage seniors to move closer to services – and how then to get the public to help fund and see the value of these programs.*

*In a tactical sense it would be able to point to improvements in particular geographic areas. In a more general sense, it would help define the problem for the state as a whole and help us start to make choices.*

*An example is HopeLink in east King County, which has a dispatch center and coordinates dispatch for a number of programs. They do a good job matching subsidized services for customer groups, making it transparent for users where the money comes from. Users don't care where the money comes from—they just want to get somewhere. There's been a significant improvement in mobility for customers. HopeLink has started to measure performance—that's an important way to move ahead.*

*They would follow straightforward measures similar to those mentioned in previous question:*

- *Be clear about the goal(s) of organization*
- *Reasonably do what they can operationally within their funding*
- *Make sure that it is clear to users what they are doing, and that it is effective for users*

*I always say that the best way to get more resources is to be successful with the resources that you have.*

*Members are committed to not just attend meetings, but to do work outside meetings. They are willing and take on challenges and see them through. They are making measurable progress.*

*It would be an organization that has legislators involved who have knowledge of the issues (transportation, budget, human services, schools etc.) and have decision making power. They have some legislators involved now, but I'm not always sure they are the right ones. They need folks who know the issues, and know what is needed statewide, and looked at the issues through a statewide lens. And enough funding.*

*They need to come back with some radical things to do. [Prompt: What kind of things?] Nothing comes to mind right now. They need to do things differently. Not all members would be happy, but they need to tell people this is the way we're going to do it. [Now] everyone get money that comes down in silos and they want to keep that intact. They [ACCT] need to break that down. It's all about money and making sure we get the most for it. The cost per trip in some areas is too high—we need to get that down.*

*One thing I find fascinating, my brother lives near the county border, and was receiving service in another county. The transportation service wouldn't take him where he needed to go—they could drive south but not north. There was an artificial boundary they couldn't cross. He had to change where he got treatment.*

*Each county or region would have a coordination group that would meet on a periodic basis to explore what opportunities there are to share resources and eliminate duplication of service.*

*Success would be for ACCT to define benefits from coordination in addition to reduced costs. It would be great if they could show how coordination equals potential improvement in services, less vehicles on road, less traffic, less pollution, less fossil fuels etc. The value of all those things would demonstrate how their coordination efforts are worthwhile.*

*Here's an example - ACCT could fund an effort that outlined the Medicaid and ADA paratransit trips that are preformed in King County. They could put that information into one scheduling tool and it would show how many less vehicles, less hours of service would be necessary if they were coordinated. That would be a big project and it would undoubtedly cost money, and they'd have to have buy-off from Medicaid etc., but it would be good information and very helpful.*

*Success would be starting with the state agencies that they control, and ensuring that whenever those agencies purchase transportation, they are coordinating with agencies that exist in those areas.*

*Success would be projects that actually show that moving programs that don't coordinate to programs that coordinate is a good thing. Demonstrate the benefits.*

*In our opinion, ACCT is successful. That isn't to say that they can't improve, or shouldn't always be trying to improve. ACCT is influential in helping agencies to provide services in a coordinated fashion. They help the Legislature understand the special needs transportation issues and priorities.*

*They ensure that people that need special needs transportation receive the services they need – especially when many don't have other options.*

*They are a successful interagency counsel that represents a wide range of agencies, councils, etc.*

#### **Question No. 5**

**If ACCT has not been successful with its charge do you know why?**

*I'd just have to say again the challenges I've brought up – with a charge to coordinate between agencies, it's a – my understanding is that ACCT is funded through DOT – when the challenge arises it's so hard to get buy in. The scope of what they're trying to do is enormous in the face of small budgets and small staff.*

*I don't think that it hasn't been successful – so let's turn that question around. I think it has room to grow in terms of creating partnerships with non-traditional entities – such as*

*hospitals, elderly, school districts – partnership between paratransit – you know, we can put kids on public transit, it has happened, and it could be really effective. You know, I don't think that idea has come up before. People are busy with their limited budgets. I think it would take a piece of legislation to do it. Specific advocacy for initiating some pilot projects and making it happen.*

*Part of it is a lack of staffing, ACCT used to have the wandering minstrel, as I like to call them, whose job to put together grants, coordinate meetings, mitigate issues between groups. We need that coordination still. Staffing isn't what they need to do, so many grants out there but grants being written by terrible grant writers. Don't effectively apply. Don't know how to write them. One shot deal classes or consultant.*

*There are a lot of reasons. I think one is the not being able to persuade the legislature or maybe the decision makers and the council itself – everyone wants to spend more money on more services on the ground rather than on infrastructure. The truth whether they like it or not is that the investment in infrastructure has to take place first.*

*Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be the patience for that. For all of those things, I mean getting the communities a staff person who does the work, getting the rules and regulations lined up, getting built into state reporting requirements, through GMAPs in state agencies, getting reviewed by county councils, all of that is too systematic and not showy enough for people to get really excited about. But they have to understand that without those fundamental changes in place, none of those showy numbers or big ticket items they are looking for are going to happen.*

*There seems to be an entrenched reluctance to do anything other than increasing rides. There hasn't been that will in the past but maybe now we could build some momentum for it, through ACCT we could demonstrate the need.*

*I think that they could move faster if they were more powerful.*

*A huge barrier is the federal government, which is ironic because the feds are all over the coordinated transportation system. Feds are saying, coordinate. State is saying, if we put Medicaid folks on the same vehicles as transit, the auditors are going to get us. Feds have such different/stringent reporting. The problem is with how the system is set up. There are tons of rules/regulations that the state is interpreting. That is where the BOLD leadership comes in. If ACCT were willing to say, this system doesn't work – we need to change the system, they'd have support.*

*I often feel like they are dancing around the parameters – I wish they were bolder. Here's an example. If there is a problem with transporting low-income kids to schools, ACCT would develop a report with recommendations on how that could be done. This is fine. The problem is that it is only helpful if that school district knows about the report, takes the time to read the report, has the ability to implement changes etc. I wish that ACCT could take more proactive steps to solve the problem.*

*A major barrier is getting consistent participation by legislators. The Council was developed to include their participation and for some reason that hasn't really ever taken off. I understand that they are pulled in many directions, but it needs to improve. I don't really have a solution but I think that if there were one of two champions on a more consistent basis, it would help. I know that ACCT really tries in this area. It is a terrific challenge.*

*There are competing priorities within DOT. I'm talking about the highways - public transportation conversation. Special needs transportation is easy to shove off to the side when competing with mega-projects. People don't see the relationship between this – they can't comprehend the effort. The consequences are not readily apparent. A long-term educational effort is needed.*

*I would love to see ACCT get housed in another location, but I can't tell you where it should go. Human Services? Might get lost there. Because they aren't the ones with the big ticket hit to the pocket. DOT is invested because of their funding relationship. It has a self-interest.*

*There are a couple of projects underway that will have good long-term efforts but have taken a while to get there. Performance measures have been a problem. Maybe there should have been more attention paid to them earlier, but it might be evolutionary where it needs to be. Metrics being more accessible would be helpful. It's important to have the anecdotal information, but dollars and cents are often the entry and they are critical. ACCT has realized this, maybe even known it at some level since the beginning. They are trying to improve.*

*WA State is far ahead of most states in terms of ACCT's leadership – ahead of curve.*

*No matter effectively ACCT coordinates, that coordination alone is not going to be sufficient. We need additional resources. They might be able to help support efforts by coalitions of folks interested in special needs transportation to establish new/expanded public transit benefit areas currently not served by public transportation. They could help to support campaigns that would focus primarily on creating public transit benefit areas so that they could tap into local resources to provide special needs transportation. I'm not aware of any efforts to date to do that.*

*What I know of it, it was political, the decision to not give them more money and more power to enforce their work. A lot of it is that when it was set up, they had more power. But it was gutted in reauthorization. A lot of it was trimming the budget. ACCT was one of the easy areas to cut without causing mainstream uproar.*

*Funding is always a huge issue. It really is a key to bringing people to table, to getting project completed.*



*There's a powerful history. Like school districts—even though they're there, they're talking, they want to do it, there's a huge history there. Some of it is at the federal level—even though they want to coordinate; when they talk they say yes, but follow our rules. Rules come out of the federal level that make it very difficult to provide service. There are a whole host of reasons why they don't want to coordinate with Medicaid. Rules concerning charter bus service. You have to send a bus way up the county for one person.*

*I think, as always, it's a mixture of sources. First, there's not enough done at a local level – I'd like to see the ACCT council to encourage local coalitions and work with their legislators directly. We might develop some legislative champions – or at the very least get more legislators familiar with our work and its benefits.*

*During the interim we should take legislators out to see projects on the ground. We are not coordinated at a state level and that personal connection for them with our programs and with the problems that persist could be really helpful.*

*Often if we don't have a legislator on a committee who knows about this we need to do a better job getting them up to speed and engaged. For example in the next interim we'll (the agency I work for) will take members of the transportation committee (or whatever committee is appropriate for the program we want them to learn about) on a tour so they see the work – the progress, success, challenges, whatever it might be – on the ground. We're targeting programs across the state to get this attention. And the good news is that we're allowed to do it because it truly is education versus advocacy.*

*The first thing I'd say is – has it not been successful? Has it really not met its goals? Has it not started moving the issues forward? I contend that has.*

*This is a complicated problem, the problem of coordinating and improving government services. The problem exists on a number of levels – local, state and federal. To expect it to get solved in a day – it was frustrating to me because I am the kind of person who gets impatient and wants it all to get done and get done now - but you have to understand that people have to go through their own administrative processes, their own bureaucratic channels, and their own programs and find a way to integrate this and make it a priority. It's no wonder it takes real time. I would have loved it to be fast and easy too but sometimes that coordination and overhaul has to run their course.*

*This is a complicated problem on multiple levels. There's a lack of understanding of where we're trying to get, why we're trying to get there, how to effect these changes, what these changes mean for them, those kinds of things and more. There's a lack of understanding on decision makers' parts – elected officials who persist in sustaining the silos – whether deliberately or accidentally. By doing things the same way one reinforces the power of administrators who don't want to change and further frustrates those who do. It's an easy way to end a discussion, to simply say 'my funding agency doesn't want to.' It's a lot of work to make changes, and often people don't want to make the effort. How to structure local transportation services at a local level is more than needed but*

*not happening. Without empowering people who want to change, the status quo will stay the same and be a barrier to progress.*

*When you have competing agencies warring over turf that is not an insignificant thing. The broader program gets short shrift when agencies are competing to acquire more bells and whistles thinking that if they have them, they'll be more secure and better funded. Coordination isn't considered at attribute, it isn't as rewarded as it needs to be for ACCT – and other efforts like it that are or should be happening across government – to happen. If an agency has to give up the claim to exclusively providing a service, they are or fear that they are diminished in community. The question or perception of who is in charge might draw away from others' sense of accomplishment, and their actual level of credit and notoriety, and promotions.*

*At the state level right in the middle of all of this is demands from local governments, various interest groups and advocates, the legislature, and the media with KOMO TV reporting on it all.*

*The challenge for all of these agencies is that they still have a set of rules and there's not a lot of encouragement to round the corner because you could get burned. Really, when you're inside the system it easier to stay in the middle and not do better than to do exactly what the statute requires and nothing more – nothing different.*

*The federal government is not helping – HHS in DC doesn't encourage new or more efficient ways of doing business. They see it as a very steep slippery slope – and don't take lightly the prospect of things being done other than the way they say. Sure, there are some plateaus we reach in pushing to make changes. Each time a successful coming together happens in a local community, proving that coordination helps, that's a little victory. If there's enough critical mass that people organize together and show that the benefits outweigh the fear of change. If then a few remaining communities not doing it say, hey, look at how well that works, I want that too, why shouldn't we make that happen, real change and momentum can build. But up until now it's been slow. A parallel issue is the structure of ACCT, and how difficult to it is to include SPI – there's a break down barrier between school and public transportation. It's a hugely difficult issue because of the entrenched bureaucracy between people in transportation who want to create efficiencies and provide more access, and to public school advocates who think "special needs" and equate it with Chester the Molester. They're worried that kids will be exposed to bad people and bad things – but that's hardly the case and the shame is how much missed opportunity there is in providing for a community's needs*

*Part of the problem is that bus drivers and the industry have it set up right now so school bus design is carved in granite – it's as if Moses came down with the ten commandments in one hand and bus design in the other – and there are tremendous requirements in place for changing school bus design. They've gerrymandered bus design. Arguably it's the safest design and, so they say, it's all about the kids and protecting the kids. Really I think it's all about liability and lawsuits. They take special efforts to do everything*

*possible to protect kids. No one seems to care when they're off to the mall or off in a friends car – but when they're in the school bus there's excessive worry.*

*In my mind one of the things I was trying to do while working was to create a Transit presence in every part of state. In rural areas the challenge is that there is a lot of anti government, anti tax sentiment, and lots of counties don't have anything in the way of these services. That's why, especially in those areas as pilot projects, I was working to tie school buses to public transportation. These are existing resources going underused, and these are existing needs going unmet. Let the two meet and make things work!*

*I think that the public generally would support that efficiency – it benefits other parts of population that otherwise go without transportation – but it died off because it's a difficult case to make. I think that challenge still ought to be addressed. As you can tell it's the frog in pocket – and it could be another aspect of ACCT – to give attention to ways to integrate public and pupil transportation. I think they could pose the question – what about school buses and drivers? Couldn't we train them to take care of both sets of needs?*

*It's a problem that could be solved especially in rural areas – in Seattle, or other major urban areas, it could be extra step.*

*So overall I know that the progress is slow going. But I can see the light and the benefits of ACCT, and hope others can too.*

*At one point they lost funding to work with communities on special-needs projects, and that was a disappointment. It was a legislative decision not to provide the funding.*

*I think that they've struggled with getting through some of the key decision hurdles. Having the right people at the meetings is one thing, but getting them to acknowledge that we need to really a change is another thing. I think that there is some resistance for people to acknowledge that something flat out won't work. I'd like to see them go out on limb, take a chance and make some major change.*

*Example – a major battle is with the Medicaid program brokers mixing change. It's hard to come up with a system that really works. Everyone knows it is complicated and difficult to do. But maybe we should really try to make the effort. It seems there might be lots of opportunities that go untapped because there is resistance to really working that change.*

*Part of the barrier is territorial issues. And funding issues and resources. Change is scary. Loss of control is frightening.*

*Again, they've done more than I would have expected. ACCT really grew through adverse times and I'm amazed at where they are today.*

*Pushing for performance management in government is really difficult – especially when you have a committee of organizations that haven't been very good at doing this themselves.*

*Especially with the passage of the GMAP bill, government agencies now have to stop focusing on outputs and instead focus on outcomes (for example, in the past WSDOT might have said – look we built 3 buses as opposed to saying we managed to meet 90% of people's needs) and getting cost data from major players.*

*WSDOT, and pretty much all of the other agencies working with ACCT – and truly, most government agencies overall - don't know how to do this, or are just learning how.*

*The biggest things to improve in my mind are to have good, appropriate, real-time cost data, customer satisfaction, and to establish what else is on our real list of weaknesses. Right now we just don't know. It also happens because people tend to put in reports the best of what they're doing. And that is understandable. The problem is that if we don't put down the problems, we won't address them.*

*I think the good news is that the Governor is starting to really push for this kind of critical analysis and making people feel good about figuring out what's going wrong rather than feeling like agencies have to defend themselves and hide their flaws.*

*When I first got there I sensed they were not doing well—I wasn't sure why it exists or if it needs to. About the same time Paula came down and started to chair meetings, and turned the focus to “What is the outcome we're looking for?” Still, they have no authority and haven't stepped up to ask for more from the Legislature.*

*I don't really know if they have been successful, because I don't know enough about them, or about their mission. It looks like there are lots of busy people doing stuff, but don't really know if they are successful.*

*There have only been a few meetings since I've been involved, and the membership has changed just during those few meetings. I still don't understand what we are doing from meeting to meeting. I don't really know what's different from last meeting. It isn't very clear to me.*

*I realize that some of the projects are long-term projects and have maybe been in holding pattern for awhile. But it would help if that was acknowledged at the meetings, so that folks who are not as much in the know, have a sense of what is going on. I fully realize that I might not have all the background. Maybe if they provided regular program updates at every meeting – same things recurring at every meeting. Consistency would help. Carrying through from meeting to meeting. They only meet every two months. That is a long time in between for people to remember everything.*

*Funding must be an issue. I think they are better funded now, but again, I don't exactly understand where the money is going.*

*I'm not sure. I guess some of it might be funding, but again that is an easy answer. It's kind of a Catch 22. Maybe when folks are planning, they really need to be realistic about their funding, and make sure their plan is realistic – in that they have the funding to accomplish what they have planned for.*

*There has been a real effort. At first they ferreted out a lot of issues. They've produced a lot of data. I go to conferences and hear that Washington is a leader, and I think, they look good but they don't walk the talk. Some states are doing better.*

*Lack of funds to do the recommendations I just made—to go out and advocate and do demonstration grants. Those take a lot of time. We need someone special to come in and free up an employee, or just come in and set up a program.*

*Other challenges are legislative—there are no punitive consequences for not coordinating. Because [coordinated programs] are expensive to set up, it's easier to do nothing. There are no consequences for doing nothing.*

*Need a mandate/commitment from the Governor. ACCT should report directly to Governor (and not be housed in DOT). The powerful members need to be there behind the mission and participate. Big city transit agencies also need to be there because committed because they don't report to the DOT. They receive most funding and requirements from the feds, and therefore don't participate much. It'd be interesting to think about including only smaller, urban rural agencies that receive money from Governor's office participating.*

*I think ACCT has been fairly successful in smaller and rural areas. They have successful examples in those smaller settings.*

*I think that they have had no impact on larger programs. Again, reasons might include lack of funding, no mandate from leaders, etc.*

*We aren't close enough to ACCT to know whether they have fully met their mission, or whether there are internal requirements etc. that they haven't been able to meet. What we are saying is that we believe that they are successful in a way that we think is important.*

#### **Question No. 6**

**Is there a need for ACCT to continue in the future? If so, what issues should ACCT move forward? If not, why should ACCT terminate?**

*I think they could consider narrowing down their work to have more achievable goals, but they definitely need to continue. When I first came on, the first meeting I went to, I had all these questions about it. It practically took up the whole meeting for me to get*

*oriented, and I didn't even learn everything I needed to before stopping just so we could move on. I didn't – well I stopped, because I was like wow, this is huge. I'm used to bureaucracy but I was overwhelmed. Just getting the acronyms down is huge.*

*Have an orientation for new members – even just a basic power point explaining the scope, the major elements of it. It's also, what I'd want to see is the whole scope of their work so I can better assess what they should focus on.*

*It's always difficult with special needs because it's very expensive. You're limiting what you can do elsewhere if you're making everything accessible. The reality on the ground is that there are limited dollars. Having a real clear understanding of the exact scope of their mission – it's hard to figure that out but it's important.*

*Certainly is the funding and partnerships to put some realism to it. The major transportation funding in Washington has already been passed and a lot more funding is not likely to be coming in the future. But a lot more money is needed for special needs. I think we need to look at whether there are atypical dollars that we might be able to get grants or that kind of thing. Partnerships can help put together committees that search for and cultivate new dollars.*

*I think that ACCT needs to continue as a forum for creative ideas. If I had or was invited to something to spend time really thinking about this we could do something. Somebody has to do the asking and inviting, but if they get the leadership to sit down together and brain storm, we would be ready to rock and roll.*

*ACCT needs to continue. We have various administrations within state that deal with clients who need transportation. There's a patchwork of transportation systems across the state – sometimes they work together, sometimes there is animosity because they compete – open mind and distance. We need ACCT there to coordinate our work.*

*Trip connection system they are working on with state of Oregon wouldn't have happened without ACCT. Go on line, plug in destinations, and see what is available. See where services aren't available to find where the need is.*

*I always thought that ACCT should continue until all of this is institutionalized so that it just becomes a normal way of doing business. I know it can reach that point but it hasn't gotten there yet. I think it's just starting to get to that point of being accepted, and so the real changes are soon to ensue - I'll admit, I'm such an optimist because it even though it isn't there yet, it hasn't reached that point yet, I know we can do it.*

*The point I'd like to make is that the focus should be developing the infrastructure so this can happen without ACCT over time. We need help at the county, local, and state levels, and get it into the norm of doing business, so that we've made really fundamental, institutional, ground up changes in how agencies operate so that they are actually more efficient, coordinated and providing better services.*

*I think that it's a matter of making sure that coordination is a part of everyone's performance measures – if it were, I guarantee you there would be changes over night. I was going through the transit summary report the other day. It covers all of the usual - cost per traveler trip, cost per vehicle mile – but there is absolutely nothing there as asking about how many partners have you coordinated with to provide service areas – there are no performance measures related to ACCT – efficiency, coordination, none on whether your transit system has been doing work with local partners – it's not in a performance measure in DSHS or in DOT. So when they sit down with the Governor and do their GMapping there is nothing about that – there are no performance measures around coordination – and so of course people don't worry about it as much because at the end of the day they're not even being held accountable – and conversely, they're not even getting real credit if they do make progress on that front.*

*I am one who strongly believes that we shouldn't coordinate just for the sake of coordination – but rather to save money, be efficient, share best practices – but it's absolutely true that if it's not a reporting requirement it's hard to motivate people to care about it. At the Governor's staff level if it just becomes a reporting measure that would go a long way. If transit's summaries are including this information, it's weak but it's a start. There are people who care about this but they're not getting credit for the good work they are doing and it's unrealistic for that to be sustained.*

*The other big thing is that on the grant applications, every single grant application has to fill out a section that asks “what are you doing to coordinate in your community?” and how are you doing to do that, but no one ever goes out to see if it's actually happening and what the results are.*

*Does anyone ever call up the partners and say, “how is that coordination going” – does anyone ask those who are supposedly being coordinated with?*

*That would go a long way there. There were lots of great statements. If there was some follow up – see if it's – anyone can put the words on paper and they do.*

*We need to put more teeth into the expectations so that grant recipients know they will both get credit if they do this stuff or be held accountable for not getting it done.*

*Absolutely. If the desire is to actually coordinate special needs transportation, then ACCT is essential. Either in its existing form, which would take longer, or in a more powerful form, which would go faster.*

*Absolutely. It is a formal structure, which is needed. In general, we've moved to a place of institutional advocacy. There are still good citizens that carry messages etc, but because of the complexity of issues, it has become more the job of staff to be advocates. ACCT has done this. While they have plenty of room to grow, it is essential for them to be there. Can't do it in a vacuum.*

*Yes. When ACCT had funding available that they could use as seed money/incentives then they have been successful. But without that, they have been less successful. I still think they should continue.*

*It absolutely needs to continue – if it's at all possible, it should have more money to provide the important services and role it plays. I know that there are some states that either through extra fee on license plates, telephone bills, or through other means manage to establish dedicated, reliable and fairly robust funding for special needs transportation. Member agencies could lobby for some of these changes, or work through the appropriate channels more forcefully since some of us are statutorily prohibited from lobbying.*

*I think that the needs of transportation funding are getting higher profile in the legislature, though we definitely need a strong advocate in the legislature to help move this issue forward in particular. Really the most effective thing would be to have users of the transportation system lobby the legislature. As far as I know, there isn't one central organization for special needs people to get involved.*

*The grants they've given out have been well used. In specific target areas their work and contribution has been really effective but it hasn't been comprehensive enough, or as impactful as it could be if they had more to give.*

*I think that there is starting to be more public awareness about the issue of special needs transportation generally. Just recently, the transportation committees from both houses were having public meetings on the issue so that has helped. And also the most recent round of federal government transportation legislation has specific appropriations for requiring these plans – so agencies are getting a clear signal that this has to be dealt with and addressed, and planned for.*

*Absolutely – without a doubt. There are many new issues around, and all the different pots of money. It is so confusing. It would be so nice to have a project submitted to one entity and have everything be determined there. It is frustrating and overwhelming to figure out system – where to apply, how to achieve money, etc. I'm sure there are many missed opportunities because people don't have the information they need.*

*Oh yes – ACCT must continue. They've just scratched the surface. Got the dialogue started. They are on the right track. They could be more effective by getting projects actually happening. When they had funding for coalitions, coalitions popped up, but when they lost the funding they went away. You can't start out and then go away. They need funding, demonstration projects, measurement. They need to measure how effective programs are. That might be difficult—if they are evaluating a unique strategy, the measure might not be just cost per passenger.*

*The things they are doing for us need to continue. That said ACCT may not be the only agency that could do those things. But right now I don't see why it should be changed.*



*It absolutely needs to exist, and with some tweaking is a great resource.*

*ACCT has raised some level of awareness in the state agency membership in particular of the importance of this kind of work, it has raised some legislative awareness too. DOT, through the ACCT council, has aggressively gone for federal funds and earmarks – and although most of us want to believe it isn't about money we know we couldn't do it without that. We're not where we are with mobility but we're making progress and a lot of that is thanks to ACCT.*

*There was a point in time in the past when we had planning funds to create these coalitions and a stipend to pull them off. Thanks to that program we came together on a quarterly basis and made good progress sharing ideas, tackling challenges, and building collegiality among our agencies.*

*But since there is no funding now – and DOT people are overworked and don't have time or money – ACCT should take on the role of facilitating meetings of local coalitions.*

*This could happen at WSDOT's annual conference, or happen at an ACCT meeting (before or after) but this separate time to get together as coalitions was really a rich way to say, "What are other people doing that I can learn from? What am I doing that I can share? Where can we team up in the future?"*

*I of course believe there are reasons for it to continue. If the people in power – legislators and the governor – want to provide a good underpinning for transportation options for people and believe that it's important to do that – then we need to improve how we are doing things. ACCT is an essential instrument to do that.*

*We need to question is ACCT best structured to meet that need? And I suppose more fundamentally, if others don't believe in that core mission of course it is a problem, but I hope that they do.*

*The bottom line is that legislators need to get involved, provide encouragement – through whips and carrots – and see if they can move us on the right track. The good news is that we can do this, and if we do make it happen, the model of integrating and coordinating the silos, it could be used elsewhere.*

*I definitely think so. They started something really good. I was speaking in Boise yesterday and ACCT came up—what good things they are doing. Working with RTPOs and MTOs—it's good to work with them, get them more on board with coordination issues and Safety-LU issues.*

*Technical assistance is huge. [What kind?] Helping communities get a ballot measure passed, starting a Job Access program, writing grants. I don't think there's another agency within DOT that works on coordination issues.*

*Definitely – I'm a supporter. They should continue to move the issues discussed above forward.*

*ACCT is absolutely essential, and absolutely should be retained. Really what I'm trying to make happen is to raise the visibility and promise of ACCT – to give it higher stature out there.*

*It needs to be more than a minor committee in the bowels of each organization – right now it's too much the step child, an after thought rather than a priority. Rather than picking out which agencies should continue or not to be involved, and instead of trying to make it something people care about when it's clear that will be hard in such busy agencies – I think we should maybe make it a major responsibility of TIB board which could be a better place for it.*

*Basically what I've been doing is brainstorming about where it could have more influence. It's at the bottom of barrel is where it is now. The question I'm asking and trying to answer is how to raise its profile. How to coordinate transportation agencies among local governments and private vendors?*

*I don't think its current structure or location, if you will, is the best. We're talking about massive organizations out there and it's not working as well to have them be the ones in charge. So what I'm saying is that we need to make ACCT more influential – and for that to happen ACCT needs more power and needs to be able to be pushy. That means they need more independence from the very agencies they are supposed to be evaluating, improving and coordinating.*

*No one would notice if it went away. Maybe that's a bit harsh—some agencies have connections with it. But I wouldn't see a single e-mail if it went away. But there is a need for something if special needs transportation is important. There are three things they could do, and are partly doing now. One is basic R&D, trying to figure out models that would work better. Second is piloting those models—sort of like product development or market research. Those two things they are kind of doing now. The third thing is to begin establishing a series of standards for what the performance of systems should be—rural, suburban and urban. Then look at individual regions and agencies and begin to monitor them against the standards, and use funding to close gaps. Always focus on results. ACCT should be able to say what outcomes were produced. It's amazing the results you get when you do reporting on outcomes.*

*[Prompt: You mentioned that ACCT doesn't have authority. Should they have more authority?] If we gave ACCT authority to tell people what to do, it wouldn't work. For one thing ACCT doesn't know what they should do. ACCT needs to use information about outcomes to get social service agencies to do things. Merely having established goals and measuring performance, and looking at how ACCT uses funding, is a better way to get results.*

*Absolutely. Because ACCT does add value. It does provide an important function. It serves to remind me that people can't/shouldn't be isolated. They need to be able to get around. Someone has to be responsible for coordinating that.*

*Yes - with a clear, defined charge. And when I look at the statute that created ACCT, it seems like their mission is all over the board. It is scattered. It would help if they could narrow it down and really focus.*

*But I do think they should continue. There is so much to be done in getting rid of those barriers we discussed (stupid stuff). And better coordinating and providing people with access to essential life services is critical. There are so many people/populations that need these services. We really need an entity like ACCT that makes sure things are running smoothly.*

*Yes, I think they should definitely continue. If they aren't around, the coordination would definitely go by the wayside. And I believe that they can support some of those other projects that we discussed. ACCT provides a unique, cohesive perspective that no other agency provides. Others have expertise in special issues i.e., disabilities, poverty, elderly, etc. but they don't also bring the transportation perspective. ACCT translates and connects those issues to transportation. Others have their own expertise, but don't have the transportation perspective.*

*Example – when thinking about the siting of care facilities. Often those folks don't necessary think about located facilities that are accessible to transportation. And then it becomes more expensive for patients to get there than it does for them to pay for the service.*

*We have debated that long and hard. If they would do something I would support them. They should come back with ways we can become more cost-effective—break down barriers. I don't know what they've done differently. I'm chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and I don't know. One difficulty has been getting a senator to serve on their committee.*

*I'm not sure. That's because of the new Public Transportation-Human Service Agency Coordinated Transportation Plan that is required under Safety-LU. It is required nationwide. It seems very duplicative of ACCT. I've gotten to scratching my head and wondering if there is any need to continue at the local and state levels if there is this federally required program. Since one is mandated and one is not, and since there is duplication, wouldn't it make sense for ACCT to transform into a Human Service group? No one wants to go to two meetings and discuss the same things.*

*If they do continue, they should focus on areas the federally mandated legislation does not address. If they should cease, it should be because they were not able to find such areas.*

*I don't know what ACCT's role is in the future, but I do think that the need for ACCT is greater than ever. Unfortunately the way ACCT has been "nitched" is not necessarily the tool to get what needs to be done. ACCT has no power to really accomplish the big issues. The big members really need to participate if they are to succeed. The 3 biggies are still Medicaid, the school district, and DOT, and they just aren't at the table. Paula's (Hammond) commitment has helped, and her connections to the Governor have helped. What is really needed is a DOT head that is committed to public transportation, and I don't think that Doug MacDonald is.*

*ACCT should continue to spearhead special projects. For example - identifying operating standards. Bringing technology (example is the stretcher bill). They can work the outside constituencies that can advocate (since ACCT is in the inside and can only advocate so much).*

*I think there is a need for ACCT to continue. I do think however, that there has been a lot of effort for a small amount of success. And success has only been in small jurisdictions.*

*Maybe continuation is not warranted IF there is support and commitment from state government to make sure that things happen. Most specifically there is a strong need for Medicaid to coordinate with transit.*

*In our opinion, ACCT is probably more important now than ever, given the extension of some federal programs, and the additional of the new program and requirements.*

*Can we refashion or strengthen ACCT? We should always be looking at ways to improve, do things differently if it adds success etc. Again, that isn't our call to make (it is not a federal issue). Let Governor Gregoire answer that one.*

#### **Question No. 7**

**How should the structure of ACCT change to increase the chance of success improving transportation for persons with special needs?**

*The structure needs to be more communicated to the members. Work on making it clear and easy to understand how ACCT operates.*

*I'm not familiar with the structure – of special needs transportation and government agencies – but I know it was good to coordinate invitations on a special needs work session that we held in July. It helped bring visibility to some of these topics.*

*I would like to see the legislature give ACCT more authority in funding more programs, and implementing their ideas. It would be great if ACCT was able to be more of an arbitrator in how funding happens. ACCT could also do better in the way of educating people who think that Puget Sound gets all the dollars for new projects – when in fact the new taxes send more money to those rural areas than they would get otherwise because*

*their tax bases are so small. There are perceptions out there that are not a reality, and if ACCT was more involved with funding and with program development, they could help bridge that gap.*

*I think that ACCT should communicate with public more in general. Most people have no clue that there is so much need out there, that there is so much good that transportation services do, or understand the consequences of not providing these services. Rural areas don't appreciate the tax base issue, and other areas forget to appreciate the hardships people face when they can't get to work, to medical services, or elsewhere.*

*It's a shame, but many people base their perception of public transportation on experiences they had 10-20 years ago, and they've not used it since – there have been so many improvements and functionality added, their experience 20 years ago isn't today. That makes it really important for the public education piece to succeed.*

*Unfortunately, the reality is that most people aren't willing to leave their car at home – people are self centered and they forget that there is a need that someone else might have, and that tax dollars should go to meet that need.*

*More often than not, people look at buses (or public services generally – or just life overall!) and ask, "What's in it for me?" I know a number of people who see a double length bus with 10 people on it and assume it's a waste of money, but what they don't know – and don't bother to find out – is that the bus has traveled 50 miles, dropped off 200 people on their ride, and has been incredibly efficient at being the only way that those people could get to work or school or where they needed to go.*

*People don't see the need in rural areas because they don't live there. When I was in Walla Walla, the bus ran from 6am to 5pm. At first blush that might seem fine, but the system didn't work. Because if you work on one side of town, have child care on another, and get out of work at 5pm, there is no way to use the bus. Budgetary concerns for service. Yakima Valley (funded partly by ACCT) still need a feeder system.*

*A lot of people that I'm directly working with and other people have no transportation options – at best they have 15-20 year old car they are nursing along but keeping that going and keeping a job is very difficult. A key thing we've been doing is finding out where people live and determining if there is a service for them. For example, in King County's Rainier Valley there was this group of people who had no local jobs and no access to the ones further away, but by working together with the employer they were able to hire 100 of them and created a unique program that changed their lives.*

*We need to have ACCT there to have the dialogue, to have problem solving, to have a forum for sharing ideas.*

*Generally, people living in a community don't know where to go for help, they don't know who to call when they can't find a way to get to work. ACCT was part of that*

*process, a critical part. Poor people in our society don't often have a voice and ACCT helps give them a voice and raise their stakes and chances in life.*

*I always thought it was a real handicap to have it attached to a state agency. The advantages are that they are a part of a big state infrastructure so there are efficiencies there. Certainly it can be helpful to be a part of the personnel systems, supplies and all of that. I always thought, though, that it would be better to be in the office of the governor, in a legislative office, in the OFM, and some other places because, well, everything – it is perceived as a DOT program and in that way there is a perception that DOT is calling the shots. And that, locally, is not really palatable to many people or agencies – and that is true with other state agencies too. There is so much territoriality especially with a powerhouse like DOT that it can be alienating to have ACCT be part of them. In that way, it might more than offset the benefits for ACCT of being under DOT's wing.*

*Just with the budget alone you can start seeing the drawbacks of being housed within DOT – for example, the ACCT council might come up with a budget request and if anyone in DOT doesn't agree, it is gone. So rather than having DOT be a player in the ACCT discussion, they hold the trump card but don't necessarily support or know much about ACCT – or may even feel threatened by it. A change in ACCT's location is something I knew from the start might need to be made, and I think it is worth investing time into.*

*The problem is that, as it is currently structured, ACCT doesn't get to function as independently as it should. We talk about it as being a forum with equality of participants and say that it is looking toward really collaborating, but then it's really just attached to one state program that controls its budget, its staff, and other resources. That sends a confusing and somewhat deflating message to other participants. I think that ACCT would carry more weight if it were attached to the Governor's office. The downside is that it might not get as high a priority and if someone else is in the governor's office – hmm, another thought I've had is that it's perhaps better housed in the Secretary of State's office – the downside of that is that it might not get as much nurturing – the upside is that the Secretary of state is really getting a lot done in the way of efficiency and coordination, and I'd imagine that possibly just as much if not far more progress could happen from that office.*

*The people in DOT don't truly see the perception of that problem – the problem that if it's housed in DOT, it disinvests other agencies. They think, but it's the department of transportation's issue, this is our thing, but they don't see the perception of the local communities – and ACCT over the time has done a fairly good job of not looking like it's wholly a DOT program but it's a struggle to keep it that way.*

*I do think that it is a handicap that should be evaluated. The secretary of state's office is so much into this kind of work, perhaps exploring that is worthwhile.*

*They may want to think about adding union representation. The unions could be a big stumbling block.*

*ACCT seems to have good representation on the council. The make-up seems fine. It's not who it is, it is what they do. I wish they would take stronger positions and really go for it.*

*The original ACCT administrator had a long DSHS history and moved back and forth between DOT. The dual set of connections was interesting. Is there a way for OSPI and DSHS have some financial commitment? It would be interesting if they were mandated to fund half or third of program. If administrative departments have a financial commitment, they might pay more attention. That would help to bring them to the table more fully. And matching dollars from other big agencies would enable more resources. It would also make ACCT less vulnerable to being discontinued if all 3 departments had financial commitments.*

*I also think there should be more DCTED involvement. There is a whole relationship of transportation to economic development. There should be more emphasis on this issue. It would make it 4 part versus 3 part. They should consider naming DCTED as one of the 4 partners.*

*I haven't been to an ACCT meeting in years and I'm not that knowledgeable about their current structure. In the past they had a few legislators, state agency folks, consumers. I think that is a reasonable approach for policy development. They also need appropriate resources and staff if they are to be successful.*

*There are probably too many or not the right legislators on the committee. Very often they don't attend the meetings. Or they're not plugged into what is going on. I think we need to get people who are on the transportation committees of both houses so they know the issues better and are more invested – that could be a better way to structure it.*

*Right now there is only one representative for the users of system. That's not enough. We need to have at least two.*

*It seems to be pretty good. Every meeting I've been at has had a broad makeup of different people. I can't say how they're looked at by legislators—they don't seem to attend frequently. They could be more effective working with legislators. The need to explain [ACCT's mission] to legislators comes from the department level, but local communities could meet with legislators. Get into a dialogue with local leaders. But advice from the department might be handy about how to approach them.*

*I'm not really familiar with the structure. If I was maybe I'd know.*

*I was really pleased about, and I had pressed for, a representative of a regional transportation planning agency to be on the ACCT council because it's such a critical voice to have included. I pushed for that years ago and it didn't happen.*

*I'm trying to think about who isn't there but should be. The Transportation Commissioners perhaps? I think that Robin and Paula do a great job staffing the council, and bringing appropriate issues to them. But I think that – I tried to give that some thought – that the private sector could get involved in some way?*

*Perhaps – well, a big player like Goodwill industries – they could bring expertise to the table. And there's probably other big statewide organizations and companies that could share valuable expertise as well. Perhaps they could help. Whenever we do social service work its touchy feel but especially given the lack of funding and so on, we need to get down to business. A Goodwill or other industry entity could help.*

*We also need to find a way that the new federal requirement to include rural planning is leveraged. I think that it will be really helpful to have those dollars available and we need to take advantage of that. On that note, DOT has been good about making funds available and I appreciate that.*

*Overall I'd say that ACCT could also help by better integrating roads projects with other transportation planning. Certainly this goes beyond just ACCT in terms of who needs to take this approach, but it could be a start. We need to better integrate this kind of planning with land use planning – and in that way CTED should really be at table – because where they decide to locate new housing and job centers, where to build new lanes or not, all of that is a critical part of mobility choices.*

*Voting members of ACCT shouldn't be members of organizations being asked to make changes.*

*Of course there is a natural resistance to protecting your own and resisting change. Even when you have seniors being representatives their managers don't want to make change. We are not as people and government predisposed to make changes. Membership – voting – those roles should consist in people who have interest in transportation in their community but have no obligations or ties to programs being evaluated or being asked to change.*

*Also, we need to have ACCT get some weight or authority. The particular role of the governor's office and legislature (whether they were voting members or not) is really important to have in the room, sure there are reasons before to not have voting power – is that they can hold people accountable like none other. They can take info back and share it with colleagues – structuring budgets and programs. This could help free them from the silos they're accustomed to – and provide them with more creative or incentive to build efficient, new programs that integrate needs into their budgets and program descriptions – so they hold managers accountable for delivering on those goals. It would be nice to see them be a stand-alone agency. Sometimes they are limited in what they can do with the Legislature because they are part of DOT.*



*Go out and really provide the supporting role – not forcing coalition building on local – they will need additional resource. They won't be able to do all the grassroots out in the field. I think they do their best work out in the field – support the bonding. Support staff does a good job, but if they take it to the next level, it seems like they would need more resources.*

*ACCT needs to be elevated in its stature and importance. It's too bottom of the barrel in terms of how it's considered by the very agencies that it includes – it's just another thing they have to work on rather than their main reason for existing.*

*The way the board is established fits the usual stakeholder model. I don't see anything necessarily wrong with that. But it's very rare that you get much creativity from the members. You do get reality checks. People point out things that would be problematic. It's rare that people say "Here's how we ought to reform." That usually comes from a legislator or leadership of the executive director of the group. But we don't need to change the board. It represents the right groups—all advocates and dispatchers of transportation.*

*I haven't really seen the org chart and can't really speak to that either. I have looked at the— I do letterhead however and I think you have the right people.*

*I think that bringing "traditional" transportation to the table in a more formal role would help. I think that the recognition that it is important for these types of people to formally be part of the discussion is important.*

*Make sure that the right people are on the council. Make sure the make-up is reflective of the populations that are being served. Think broadly about who is sitting at the table. Again – invite outsiders that have a stake to become more involved.*

*I really don't have the expertise to answer that because I don't really know what their structure is. From what I see with their staffing (which is limited), I think they do a good job.*

*I do think they should stay within DOT because we are talking about transportation. It is more than a bus or highways. It seems the best place.*

*I don't know—couldn't make a statement about that.*

*They are going to have to transform—look at the changing environment and see that some of what they've been doing is now required [by SAFETEA-LU]. They need to establish a new identity for themselves.*

*Reality is that you are not going get Metro, Spokane, Tacoma, etc to really participate. Again, they receive money, and report to the feds, and therefore they are responsive to the feds.*

*I don't see how changes to ACCT's structure would necessarily increase success. I think that changes in state government might increase success.*

*For example, in Texas, the Medicaid transportation operation was moved out of social services and into transportation. This might make sense here. Instead of setting up a separate transportation system, DOT might be more inclined to do more if it were within their own department. It would likely cost more to house the operation in DOT. They would likely want to work with transit companies that might be more expensive, but they would also have better training, better records, etc. which would improve service, safety, etc.*

*Part of the issue with this thought however is that you have to look at the funding sources. You'd have to convince state leaders that even though they might lose some Medicaid funding sources, overall, they would probably receive better funding (and better, safer service)>*

*In Oregon, the Medicaid program simply said that wherever there is a transit agency, they will manage the special needs transportation program.*

*Not an issue for us to say – or know.*

#### **Question No. 8**

**ACCT members are from different organizations and have a variety of accountabilities, what should ACCT's relationship be to member organizations?**

*If ACCT wants to have accountability they need the decision makers there. It's interesting –when you have someone who is not part of the leadership of an agency, you get the “Oh, but I've got all this other stuff to work on” and the leaders bring an authority that I don't have. That's probably going to be true of any interagency thing where you want to get the leaders but they appoint someone else. Acknowledging that if the leaders are there you have more accountability, but beyond that it's not responsible.*

*I'm really not that familiar with the structure.*

*I do like the structure it currently has – being comprised of legislators, heads of state agencies, It's critical to have that mix of people at the table, they bring relevant views. Public hearings aren't a great forum necessarily because you only have certain people talk – groups with an axe to grind.*

*Most of the need is for more funding. ACCT doesn't have a big enough budget to be a real power player – whereas DOT and even CTED have millions to hand out. ACCT has very little to maybe a million to work with. It would be nice to see money earmarked to do special projects, and find some way to create permanency to those projects if they are succeeding.*

*What ACCT can really help with is helping people be innovative and outside the box. Other types of transportation to be readily available.*

*Reservations don't have reliable transportation. It sucks big time for people trying to get jobs and have basic mobility. How can tribal members improve themselves when there are big time problems with the transportation system, or lack of one?*

*I think that having ACCT housed within DOT might raise conflict of interest possibilities. It makes people remember who you work for – but then again, while it's nice ideally to have it as independent ACCT would also lose some clout if it were off on its own.*

*It's an interesting dynamic because it's set up so that first of all there is representation from all of the different industries, so to speak, and the consumers, so first of all it has to play the representative role. The member groups are represented by that one person at the council, and they bring information to and take information back to their own agencies. Or at least that is the way that the model is supposed to work.*

*There is supposed to be an implementation and enforcement aspect. That when decisions are made the people are the table they are allegedly able to commit their agency to a course of action.*

*Those roles can be very conflicting because they don't always help move this forward, they don't always have the right power, or they might end up having to buck their own agency to move an ACCT goal forward.*

*I struggled with this one for a long time because you have to have the representation and communication piece but when it comes to a course of action and enforcement – are we expecting too much from the council – is that their role? I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure if we should try to push harder for it.*

*Some of the local communities - and we tried to duplicate this with ACCT and I'm not sure we did this very successfully – we wanted the decision makers to come to the table – they have some decision makers here, and sure some of them are delegated down the chain of command – but the problem is that then they and other agencies can't commit for their member organizations. In the case of some of the state programs, if the right person was there they would be able to make decisions happen. Within ACCT, one of the challenges is this interesting combination of the levels of authority, and that those levels are uneven causes a lack of progress.*

*When they say at a council meeting, this is what we need to do, there's not necessarily follow through. Maybe that's why I hate to use the word weak when describing ACCT, but the unfortunate outcome of the lack of authority and balance at the table is that people end up feeling the need to avoid big issues – and ACCT has been unable to follow through on major goals.*

*I don't know if it's possible for there to be a total agreement to be more commitment friendly or forceful if you will because transit can't make decisions at these meetings. Because transit represents associations and thereby are not able to speak for them, the transit representatives are always having to walk a fine line – both of not wanting to offend their members but wanting to be coordinated. All transit agencies doesn't feel the same way so there's a delay time for them to go back to their member agencies, make decisions, come back, see how others feel, and those rounds of negotiations can take too much time to be worthwhile.*

*I wondered if there should be a state agency body and a representative of all the industry and community bodies – and they sit on the same council but with different roles. I'm not quite sure but I'm not remembering it all. I know that there are different ways to do it because even within the council the members from local communities are just saying to the state agencies, well if this is such a good idea and we're all agreeing that it is, why don't you just do it? We can't, but you can! Just tell us that you give the okay and we can move forward! Use the power you have! So there might be a way to structure to ACCT so that you can have those state agencies with power at the table. But still not everyone is at the table anyway.*

*The legislature's role is also very important. They select their own members to be representatives to the council. But again, unfortunately there is such a variety of levels participation, in terms of the knowledge base, the commitment level. I think that every program like this has to have a champion in order to succeed. I think that in that way the legislative role is important. I noticed that when legislators are at table, the state agencies definitely perked up in a way they hadn't before (not transit agencies, but state agencies). They seemed more committed, responsive, engaged. I'd hate to lose that – if we did not having legislative participation.*

*Each of the participating agencies should be incorporating special needs transportation in their long and short term plans. Then there should be integration in their plans with the overall plan/vision. And they should all be talking about it with other members. ACCT should facilitate it. Agencies should be able to talk about what they are doing.*

*ACCT is the higher level decision makers, which is great. We need bravery from them. Underneath that there are the program managers, and they can be leaders or barriers. There is a sublevel of ACCT called PACT. They are the program level representatives of the state agencies participating in ACCT. There needs to be a requirement from each of the participating agencies to participate in this. This is where things actually happen. If all the players don't have their representatives there, it isn't worthwhile. A functional PACT is necessary – but if not functioning, then it is a waste of time. PACT is the one that could say here is our vision at the state level. This is what we'd like to do at the state to make things more coordinated. It's got to start somewhere.*

*I don't know enough about it to have an opinion.*

*Again I think if they were given some legislative backing – if they had more power, they could hold people's feet to fire. The problem is that agencies have so many things to do legally that what ACCT is trying to achieve voluntarily just doesn't make the priority cut.*

*It's all a little bit confusing to me. ACCT used to be more of an independent operator but now they seem to wear various DOT hats. It would be helpful if there were clearer definitions about their roles and responsibilities. Are they representing DOT or are they a separate ACCT?*

*I would like to see a staff assigned to specific regions. It would be really nice to have one representative who could be an advocate/expert in that region. I understand that might be a staffing resources issue, but it would be nice. I realize that they are probably already stretched thin.*

*I'm not sure if it is best for them to be housed in DOT. I think it is driven by funding and in that case, it probably makes sense for them to be there. Seems like an okay place to me for now.*

*It's been working pretty well. There have been no huge disagreements.*

*I'm not really sure. That's not something I know about.*

*Perhaps – and I don't know what the conversation is when ACCT approaches an organization for a representative to the board – but regardless of what it currently is I think that a rigorous orientation should happen before joining the board, including a clear review and agreement on ground rules and expectations.*

*What happens at regional council is that people know they are supposed to and have already agreed to take off their local hat and put on regional hat. The expectations aren't clearly explained for ACCT – people generally don't seem to know (or haven't totally bought in on) what the time commitment is, and aren't clear about what their agency has to gain or lose by fully participating. So I'd say that more in the way of orientation and agreement would be helpful.*

*Is there even an orientation for new members? I'm not sure what the agreement is with DSHS, others, in terms of what the expectations. I don't know if it's the same from one agency to another.*

*Perhaps we need to look at it from a negative view point, both in terms of getting people to buy into ACCT's work plan and enforcement, and in terms of how we are evaluated so that people see the benefit of our work. Rather than asking the question, "Show me what you've done", ask the question, "Show me what the cost is to people, what wouldn't happen, if we didn't exist."*

*For example, if people can reach urban areas for employment they get access to all these things: a broader choice of jobs, 20% more income, a chance of promotions, and they bring that back to the community – so when we don't have the funding or haven't been given the tools to coordinate, we need to be able to show what didn't take place.*

*It can be hard to make the compelling case.*

*So many people say, "Well if it's hard to get to that job, people should just move in closer to the city." They wonder, is providing special needs transportation just encouraging sprawl? But what's troubling is that so many of the naysayers are really not looking out for people at all income brackets. We need to educate more people and decision makers that this kind of transportation service will ALWAYS cost more. We will be as efficient as possible but it will always cost more. Performance measures should be VERY limited in number. There are things we are quantifying anyway but there are certain comparisons that aren't viable or wise.*

*The more we integrate special needs with general planning, the more we will end up representing them – and meeting their needs - in our GMA, transportation plan, and other regular reports, if we're able to start requiring that we account for what services are or are not being effectively provided, we'll start giving people an incentive to work on these issues. And I work on a lot these – a lot of the – things you don't measure with b/c ratio.*

*When I say that we need to do more of this kind of reporting it's also largely because we tend not to be very good with measuring what we do – it's hard when there is no method – but the more that we encourage or require people to plan, coordinate the more likely we'll be to have good measurable numbers in the future.*

*When I say we're doing well at \$45 per trip, that's hard to explain but it's very real. Show me a way it could be less expensive. I'd love for it to be but this is what it costs.*

*And again going back to the idea of asking the question in the negative, rather than saying, "How could it be so expensive," ask the question, "What would the consequence be of not providing these services?" I think we'd establish that the cost of isolation, isolation of youths, that we'd be paying higher costs without it. We're doing good work. People just need to fund it and get to know it better.*

*All of us believe we're not ever going to need it – until we have aging parents. The services ACCT is trying to coordinate are a way that families can be relieved from making transportation trips for parents. As a society we pay dearly for that if the services aren't available. In terms of our families, compromising our jobs, if we do not have these supports in a community we're putting a lot at risk.*

*There's a continuum of costs in a society. People cost more to a society at the beginning and end than the middle.*

*Agencies should be able to act and represent their own organizations interests and programs. However, what can happen is that narrow parochial interests are heard more than wider state wide concerns. Yes, we need to hear from them because sometimes they have legitimate issues. It may be that they are constrained by existing rules and that they have unique feedback to share.*

*Without follow up legislation that gives ACCT more leverage, we're really stuck in a place of being unable to make needed changes and improvements. Legislators can get mad, etc. and can change the laws although right now it does not seem likely that they would do that.*

*One point is that it would be nice if the legislature examined the issues and told us what they believe is the state's interest in all of this. Should the state care? That was the question you didn't want to have answered until we had the right majority in the legislature. If those not supportive people are in power and answering that question, then ACCT goes away. If the answer is that we are concerned with efficiency and with these citizens, we need to ask ourselves and answer the question of what are we prepared to do? I believe we should do something about.*

*It would be nice if ACCT could make members more accountable, get them to hold up their piece. On occasion it seems like some board members just show up and don't follow through. Maybe transportation isn't the main thing their organization does and they don't look at the big picture.*

*I think that there is good representation on the council. It seems like they consider when they need to add folks if needed – they've done that by adding ad hoc members. That is healthy for both sides. It's good to have one's peer group breathing down throats and call them on things that need to be called on.*

*If it's a coordinating role it needs to be independent from and (in actuality and in practice) it should be on its own versus run by DOT – it should be independent I believe, its role can be to moderate and evaluate, and to set up a system to embrace goals that are set up by different jurisdictions.*

*So in essence, ACCT needs to be more independent but strong enough to get major players to listen to it. As you can imagine it's pretty hard for it to tell WSDOT what to do, where it needs to improve, and when it needs to do it by when WSDOT is one of the central power players at the table overseeing it's own fate to begin with.*

*Don't really know the answer to that.*

*They all protect their turf. There should be ways to get them ideas of ways to do things better.*

*If this means the Olympia steering group, it should continue as a central source of information—a clearing house—and for following a legislative agenda. They should share examples of best practices around the state. There is no direct communication among local ACCT groups—we depend on the central clearinghouse.*

*They should try to remove barriers that are [set in] federal or state [regulations].*

*Ideally, the idea was that the people on the Council could speak for their agencies. The decision makers should be on the Council. That is the only way decision will get made and implanted. The language in the law does not really clarify who should be seated on the Council. I think it should be more directed and state that the “heads” need to be there.*

*They were going to have ex-officio members from the Legislature but that hasn’t worked well. I’m not sure why. I don’t really know what happened with the Legislative representatives. They were supposed to be champions back in the Legislature.*

*As the role of ACCT has diminished after creation and key funding and legislative battles have been lost, there has been less incentive for the key players to be at the table.*

*I think that it has spiraled down since last reauthorization.*

*I’m not sure I really understand the question. If the goal is to get programs to coordinate, the people who really need to be at the table are the funding sources. If you have providers at the table and they are thinking about coordination, there are going to be winners and losers, which will influence their decisions. My recommendation is that they look at relationships and think more about whom the funding sources are, and how can we get them to be involved.*

*ACCT should be a voice for their agencies, so they can truly represent their agencies. They should be able to talk with the various agencies, tribes, etc. and be able to come back to their Board, or Director, with an answer and then be able to act. They are a Board representing a constituency group. They need to come to the table with their homework done, participate, and facilitate their groups to come up with a collaborative answer.*

*There are many of ACCT’s issues that play out a county level. There is some modeling going on there. Local agencies are trying to recreate what ACCT does. I think this is probably a good idea, if it is coordinated. These local agencies help provide framework.*

#### **Question No.9**

**Are there any other thoughts you might want to share with me about ACCT?**

*ACCT should take advantage of the fact that there are new federal (and existing) programs (SAFETEA-LU) requiring locally developed human services coordination and plans. The relevancy of ACCT is even greater than before, and there are new*



*opportunities for ACCT to lead. ACCT's style of communication at the state level is important.*

*We believe that ACCT is interesting because they have a range of stakeholders on the board. This allows them to really talk about issues that all the various providers/customers face. It is a good way to get input. It works well.*

*It is most difficult to coordinate in rural areas with school districts. It would be nice if there were incentives for school districts to coordinate. Instead of a hammer approach, it would be nice if there were an incentive.*

*Medicaid's insistence at the state level to pay only regular passenger fare and not the true cost of transportation is frustrating. We can't afford Medicaid transportation. They pay the full cost to private providers but not to public transportation.*

*In philosophy I have supported them, but I need to know what they are doing. [Prompt: Are there ways they could be communicating better?] They come in and tell me what they're doing, but they need to walk the talk. I need to see concrete results.*

*I've seen what's been going on for the last few years, and I truly believe that the staff is very passionate and is really trying, and has done a pretty good job. I'm more impressed by them today than in any of the years I've been involved. I like their direction and how they are looking toward the future.*

*I recently reviewed a grant opportunity that was sent out by ACCT staff. I read it, but could not understand what sorts of things would be eligible for the grant or what the source of funding was. I think sometimes ACCT needs to remember that not everyone fully understands all the issues in-depth. They need to be considering a broader audience – and be very crystal clear in their communications. They need to be very mindful that not everybody speaks the special needs transportation lingo. This is important because they may be losing some opportunities by not speaking more broadly and clearly.*

*I have a feeling that special transportation is not important to many people. [Prompt: Should ACCT do more advocacy?] No. Is there a problem out there? Most don't see a problem with mobility. It hasn't been defined in a way that is compelling. That's the precursor for legislative action. It's like the Dorn decision with education. After the court decision, the Legislature quickly set up a new financing structure for the state. The legislative process went fairly quickly. That's because someone had been thinking about the problem before; the court decision made action necessary. We haven't seen that kind of impetus with special needs transportation. ACCT should work on R&D and development so it is ready with a solution. In terms of starting to set standards, they can do that now.*

*Good people. The DOT folks working there are good, committed people.*

*It's been very good since it was created – the resources are good and the staff is good – and they've made positive progress in bringing the players to the table. And ACCT has starting solving little problems in different areas. But the fact of the matter is that they are not solving the overall problem.*

*Yes – if ACCT is supposed to coordinate and hold people accountable, they can't do it right now. It needs to be very independent, much more independent than it currently is, to meet that goal.*

*We also have to help them figure out, how we define and measure coordination? Are we making right policy decisions? ACCT's real benefits come in evaluating how county councils and agencies are doing and where they need to improve. The current structure doesn't allow it to move fast enough.*

*Even just evaluation would be key. To be able to hold agencies providing these services accountable – and be able to say you aren't doing very well but look, these guys are, and here's how you can learn from them – but right now ACCT is too beholden to those same forces to really do their job well.*

*Overall, of course I very much want it to succeed in its mandate.*

*It might help to mandate that major state agency participants participated in ACCT – make it part of their job description. Make it primary role of their job. That should formalize their commitment, and show that the state is committed to ACCT and its functions.*

*There's room for improvement but they're doing a really good job. It's amazing how often, when I go to conferences in other parts of the country, I hear about what good things they are doing.*

*I wish there was more light shining on what is going on locally. It would be nice if legislature went back to their home district and asked questions about whether the needs are being met and what progress is being made. Hopefully they see through the naysayers. And I hope there is some recognition being given to those who are making the effort. That way others can look at the progress being made and say "how can we do that?" The last I heard I believe we have a number of communities – not tons but some – that are actively working on and improving their services. It would be great to have that work better highlighted, profiled and used as a model.*

*A bottom line for ACCT is that it needs to be given – it needs to have some teeth. When we were putting it together there was fear about giving it teeth. Maybe it's not that ACCT's executive director has the power to reach into Spokane and says "no" or "yes" to a particular project or budget item, but that legislature says let's do more on this issue, let's give ACCT the authority – and let them have more power to deal with Transit for example, a occasionally get money for grants. Eyman took away the MVET which is tragic, but the state used to think of that as state money and as justification for being*

*interested in what transit is doing. Now transit is 800 lb gorilla. In terms of funding sources and services – this is a logical place you organize your community around. Those who don't have transit need to use their non profits, if they are inventive, to try to advocate for ACCT to be more powerful and effective.*

*I want to emphasize the need to better integrate with the Medicaid broker system. The outcome would be a more flexible and efficient set of services. I truly believe we would be able to integrate those trips. Some of them are for good medical reasons, some just we don't want to change. WE could be any of us.*

*And I don't know what the level of support is within the WSDOT – I think there is a long overdue conversation with Secretary of Transportation and the Governor – because they really need to articulate how much if at all they care about this program, and if they do they need to do something to show it and make it real. It would be great to get this on the short list for agency directors to be a part of the ACCT council – but unless the Governor says this is important – and were to make it part of sustainability and GMapping accountability and efficiency, it won't be taken seriously unless someone with authority says that his to happen.*

*I'd like to see ACCT be included as part of the sustainability plan. The fundamental point though is that the Governor and the Secretary – not just her office, but the Governor herself – has to determine whether this program matters to her. If she says that it does, lets do it! If not let's quit and not spend more time on something that people in power aren't really invested in having succeed.*

*In terms of agency representatives, it's critical to make sure they have the time and authority to address the issues we bring up at the council.*

*It would really take – well, it's scary to ask that someone look at a program and know there is a chance they would say, no, this isn't something we care about.*

*So maybe instead the question we should ask is – if ACCT should exist, is DOT the best place for it? If it were housed at DSHS, CTED, as part of OFM, those are different scenarios, and they may or may not be helpful, but if they are more appropriate places that could be a good change. The structure and housing of ACCT does seem to be holding it back from making progress.*

*I'm sure that I could think of other things. I'll be interested to see this report.*

*Well of course we could always use more funding, but I'd say that overall there is more awareness about special needs transportation, both locally and statewide. I don't know, that could be thanks to ACCT, or it could be that the more we provide the more people are aware of the benefits of our services – not having a 90 year old driving down the highway in the wrong direction, seeing more needy people getting services they count on.*

*In the past few years there's been an increase in communications from people with disabilities. They are more aware of ACCT, starting to see the reality of working with the*

*transportation community for the benefit of people with disabilities. We've had people come in and talk to us. That's useful, puts a face to the need. It's very meaningful.*

*I want to say that over the years, the work that ACCT has done is invaluable. Without ACCT we would not have projects on the road that we do today. We would not be where we are today without them. My biggest fear is that they would go away and there wouldn't be that coordination. Especially in this time of higher need and shrinking dollars. ACCT is the only way we are going to even maintain services, much less increase them.*

*Just that the current staff and leadership are awesome. Having Paula Hammond in her role as chair (with her position in DOT) is excellent. I would hate to see any demotion in the chairmanship of the council. It is critical to have people in authority at the table. At the highest level. Whoever can make commitments on the part of department must participate.*

*It is also critical to get more participation by the legislators.*

*The whole funding silos is insane. It's so confusing – there are all these little pots of money with strings attached. Can't we just put it all in one pot and figure out what the needs of every community? That would be an amazing infrastructure overhaul! If ACCT could do that, it would be bold. If ACCT could break this nut, it could transform government. This situation isn't unique to special needs transportation. There are similar problems in education, health care, etc.*

*I think very highly of ACCT staff. They are incredible. The amount that they do, with the amount that they have, is incredible.*

*I just hope to see it continue until its mission is completed. I believe it is possible and that its mission is essential. So I hope it's given the resources or allowed to make the changes that will enable that to happen.*

*I'd like to see ACCT get more active in proposing and championing legislation so that we can get more groups within ACCT sponsoring and working together. People – legislators – too often look at our bills as being on the fringes. It's a challenge to get groups on board and make the decision that yes, this is worth fighting for, but no, we'll have to wait on this one for next year. It's harder to make those strategic, good choices, if you're a single agency. That's the default way it happens without ACCT. When you speak as one you get a lot more done.*

*The legislature looks at us as a gaggle unless we work together. The users of our services are fairly oblivious to what's at stake that day in the legislature, or how to get involved in the process. There's no awareness or marketing.*

*While we produce a yearly report – with our activities, goals, and achievements – the legislature gets so much paper in a given year from different agencies, it could be more effective to almost have a lobbyist who is pressing the flesh on a yearly basis.*

*That's something ACCT doesn't have – a lobbyist – but that's a DOT turf war.*

*The reality is that there was nothing there before it and ACCT really needs to continue.*

*It is a very important organization. And it's all up hill – and positive - from here. To be effective there is more that could be done. I think we should be developing and strengthening partnerships. I would love to see it be successful.*

*I think they've done a good job of reaching out to other agencies. We've been given the opportunity to participate. They can't make people do it without different authority and structure. They communicate a really complicated huge scope of things really well especially for the small staff they have.*

*They send out notifications on transportation issues that we can then send out to – and they send out clear and clearly written materials – so they are doing what they can and doing it pretty well.*